This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

**Usage guidelines**

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

**About Google Book Search**

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

435.8

CANTAB. NOV. ANGL. 1650. SIGILL. COLL. HARVARD.
CHRISTO ET ECCLESIAE
Bought with the Shapleigh Fund
Recd June 19, 1833
N. Hurd Sc.
BOSTON.

THE

# WRITINGS

OF

# JANE TAYLOR.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

2

CONTRIBUTIONS OF Q. Q. VOL. I.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY PERKINS & MARVIN.
PHILADELPHIA—FRENCH & PERKINS.
1832.

204 75.8
3

THE

# CONTRIBUTIONS OF Q. Q.

TO A PERIODICAL WORK:

WITH

SOME PIECES NOT BEFORE PUBLISHED.

BY THE LATE

JANE TAYLOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

---

VOL. I.

RELIGIOUS AND DIDACTIC PIECES.

---

FROM FIFTH LONDON EDITION.

BOSTON:
PERKINS & MARVIN, 114 WASHINGTON STREET.
1831.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

The pieces collected together in these volumes, with the exception of two or three not before published, appeared during the course of seven years, in the Youth's Magazine. The first of them was printed in the number for February, 1816; from which time they were continued, with few interruptions, till the end of the year 1822, when Miss Taylor's declining health obliged her to desist entirely from literary occupations.

Very soon after the commencement of her regular contributions to the Youth's Magazine, my sister had reason to believe that, through the medium of its pages, she had succeeded in gaining, in a high degree, the attention of a very large number of young persons. An assurance so encouraging inspir-

ed her with the earnest desire to improve the favorable impression she had made, for promoting the best interests of her readers; and whether she was grave or gay, she never lost sight of this object. Her friends have generally concurred in the opinion that many of these pieces are among the happiest efforts of her pen; and that a republication of them was due to their merit. In compliance with this opinion she had revised and prepared for the press the greater part of the papers, not long before her last illness; and she left with me instructions for the publication of the whole.

It is with pleasure that I avail myself of this opportunity to express publicly, to the conductors of the Youth's Magazine, the sense which I know my late sister always entertained of the kindness and liberality of their conduct towards herself, during the years in which she was a stated contributor to that useful and widely circulated publication.

I. T. JUN.

Ongar, September 23, 1824.

# CONTENTS.

## VOL. I.


| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Seven Years ago | 7 |
| 2. | Government of the Thoughts | 14 |
| 3. | Fashions for October | 22 |
| 4. | The Use of Biography | 29 |
| 5. | On Impressions | 37 |
| 6. | "Her ways are ways of pleasantness" | 47 |
| 7. | Sunday Morning | 55 |
| 8. | Pleasure and Happiness | 63 |
| 9. | Pleasure and Happiness | 71 |
| 10. | On Revelation xx. 12. | 79 |
| 11. | On Ecclesiastes xi. 8. | 87 |
| 12. | On Psalm xxvii. 4. | 93 |
| 13. | The Wise Man | 100 |
| 14. | The Clever Fool | 109 |
| 15. | On Revelation xiv. 13. | 118 |
| 16. | The Hopeful One | 124 |
| 17. | On John xi. 21. | 134 |

18. On Psalm cxix. 67. . . . . 140
19. On Psalm cxix. 73. . . . . 147
20. On Romans xv. 3. . . . . 154
21. Francis's Dream . . . . . 161
22. On Matthew xi. 30. . . . . 170
23. On Matthew xxv. 2. . . . . 179
24. On Ecclesiasticus xix. 1. . . . . 185
25. Letter to a Young Lady . . . . . 191
26. On Psalm xc. 12. . . . . 197
27. How it strikes a Stranger . . . . . 204
28. On Psalm cviii. 1. . . . . 213
29. On Hebrews xi. 1. . . . . 219
30. On Jeremiah iii. 4. . . . . 225
31. Winter Evenings . . . . . 231
32. On 2 Corinthians vi. 2. . . . . 238
33. Thoughts on John the Baptist . . . . . 246
34. Spring Flowers . . . . . 251
35. Conversation in a Library . . . . . 258
36. Evening Thoughts . . . . . 265
37. On Psalm cxix. 19. . . . . 268
38. The List of Names . . . . . 273
39. Thoughts in a Crowd . . . . . 285
40. One Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty-two . . 288

# THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF

# Q. Q.

---

## I.

### SEVEN YEARS AGO.

To the Editor of the Youth's Magazine.

SIR,

I FLATTER myself that your youthful readers will not be unwilling to attend to the admonitions of one who, only seven years ago, was even as they are, that is, one of your youthful readers. I am this day one and twenty: and although my coming of age was an event to which I had long looked forward with no ordinary degree of satisfaction, I must confess that certain reflections with which I am about to acquaint you, have tended very greatly to damp my spirits; and to imbitter the many warm congratulations of my kind friends on the occasion.

Upon retiring to my room after the festivities of the day are over, I feel much disposed to communicate to you the cause of my dissatisfaction; with a view, not only of relieving my own

mind, but particularly with the hope that the relation may prove of some advantage to those of your readers who may still have such a precious seven years in anticipation.

You must know, sir, that as soon as I opened my eyes this morning, the beautiful frost-work on my window brought to my recollection, as vividly as though it had been but yesterday, the fine, bright January morning, seven years ago, when I awoke in this very chamber in the highest spirits imaginable, with the joyful consciousness of being fourteen. My imagination being then somewhat more sportive than it is at present, formed a sort of indistinct association between the fantastic coruscations of the frosty panes, and my future fortunes. I could imagine groves, spires, cascades, and wide spreading landscapes, representing the bright scenes of life through which I was about to pass. But not to detain you with these chimeras; I arose, as I observed, with a fine flow of spirits; proceeding, not only from a sense of present happiness, but from a sanguine contemplation of the fair series of youthful days that lay, as it were, out-stretched before my view. In seven years I should come of age; which would happen, I found, in the year 1816; and the interval between the present time and that distant date, appeared abundantly sufficient to accomplish all to which my ambition could possibly aspire. I reflected, with exultation, on the vast proficiency I should

undoubtedly make in every thing good and desirable, should my life be prolonged to that period. It was my privilege, sir, to have parents, not only kind and indulgent, but such as took the most judicious and unremitting pains with the education of their children; so that I was too well instructed to be looking forward to a succession of vain pleasures, and empty frivolous pursuits. I was well aware, that to store my mind with every kind of useful knowledge, to cultivate a correct taste, to conquer bad habits, to cherish amiable dispositions, and, above all, to choose our heavenly Father to be the guide of my youth and my portion forever, were the only objects worthy the ambition of an intelligent being: and I believe I did feel a sincere desire and intention so to improve my time and opportunities. But without calculating upon past failures—forgetting the time already wasted, advantages neglected, resolutions broken, and the like; and without forming any *distinct* plan, or laying any *solid* foundation for future success in resisting temptation and pressing through difficulties—I imagined that the mere *extent of time* that was before me, must ensure it, and effect all I desired. What could not be done in *seven years!*

I was, indeed, aware that much remained to be done: with some thirst for knowledge, I was conscious of a constant aversion to steady application, which occasioned my being, at this time,

behind-hand with many of my juniors. My disposition was not otherwise than affectionate; but my temper being proud and irritable, caused much uneasiness both to myself and to my friends. I had frequent disputes with my brothers and sisters; and often, indeed, behaved very unbecomingly to my kind parents; and bitterly as I always repented it afterwards, still the habit was unsubdued. With regard to religion, although I was too well taught not to have, at times, very serious thoughts, and some uneasiness on the subject, still I stopped short where so many do, at *wishes* and *intentions*. I was, however, extremely dissatisfied with this state of things; and there was nothing good, or even great, that I did not fully *intend* to become by the time my education should be completed. And the elasticity of my spirits on that cheerful morning, the vigor of body and mind I then possessed, together with the sanguineness of youth, made me readily believe that all I wished would certainly be accomplished.

I spent the day merrily with my companions; not troubling myself about my plans of reformation on that day, because it was my *birthday*.

The next morning, however, I did rise an hour earlier than usual: for early rising was one of the good habits I intended to acquire; it being one on which, as my dear father used to say, all the rest very greatly depended. Being not a little pleased with myself on this account, I came in

to breakfast, after an hour's pleasant application, in great good humor;—overcame two or three little provocations without expressing resentment; and applied to all my pursuits very assiduously the whole day. Now I imagined every difficulty conquered. The next day I rose but one quarter of an hour later;—only answered *rather* impatiently when my elder brother contradicted me; and omitted nothing of my business, except getting one of my French verbs. But on the day following, it being a raw dismal morning, the bell, as usual, rang for prayers before I had finished dressing. This disconcerted me. It is not easy to maintain a good humor and a bad conscience at the same time. To the first person who spoke to me, I gave a cross answer;—had one dispute with my brother, and two with my sister before dinner;—sat down to my lessons in an idle mood; —did them all indifferently; and at night hurried over my prayer just as carelessly as usual.

Thus passed that unpromising day. But what will you say, sir, when I inform you, that with a few exceptions, such as I have described above, when under the influence of some present stimulus, or new formed resolution, it is a pretty fair specimen of all the rest, from that period to the present moment! I do not deny, indeed, but that I have made some progress in the various branches of education; nor that some of my more childish failings have been superseded by maturer and

less obvious faults; but I must say, that upon comparing what I now am with what I intended to be seven years ago, or even with what I might reasonably have hoped to be, my disappointment is complete. Nor am I able to alleviate it by laying the blame upon my education. I have enjoyed fair opportunities—had every thing to stimulate and to encourage me: but I wanted that strength of mind, that steady resolution, that constant unfailing effort to resist *small* temptations, and to conquer *slight* difficulties, which make the grand difference between the strong and the weak —the virtuous and the unworthy; between the Christian and the cumberer of the ground. Besides, instead of profiting by past experience, I was perpetually placing an unwarrantable dependence on the future. As one year after another passed away, I still hoped better things from the next, and the next; and, ever yielding to the dangerous illusion, neglected to make the effort needful at the *present moment.* Oh, to look back upon those golden opportunities!

But, sir, I intend not to trouble you with my complaints any farther than as they may prove useful to others. Many of your readers have probably as long, or a still longer period of their minority before them. How unspeakable an advantage! How vast a difference at this period of life, between seven years *ago*, and seven years to *come!* However the past may have been mis-

improved, the future—the fair, bright, promising future—is still unconsumed, unwasted: that period of life of all others the most important, because upon it the formation of the character almost entirely depends, is yet, as it were, in their own power. Let them not suppose that it depends upon the particular bent of their genius, or cast of their disposition, whether or not they are to rise above the common level of intellectual and moral excellence; or upon the exertions of their parents and teachers; it depends, as a means, upon *their own exertions.* All things are possible, I believe—all things, at least, that are good and desirable for us—to *persevering effort:* and without this, as I so well know, seven years, or seven times seven will do nothing for us;—nothing, but strengthen bad habits, weaken good resolutions, and remove opportunities of improvement. Those temptations to delay and negligence which we feel to-day, will as assuredly return to-morrow, as the morning light; return too, with increased force, though increased in too imperceptible a degree to give the alarm.

Perhaps some of your readers may imagine, that however it may be with regard to other things, I have yet time enough before me for religion; and have little occasion to reproach myself for not being quite decided in that respect, at the age of twenty-one. Alas! sir, I need not tell you that this is the most grievous part of my

complaint, and the true source of all the rest. Had I but listened to the admonitions of Scripture, reason, and conscience, seven years ago, all that I wished would have followed of course. Religion, you know, is a sure remedy for carelessness, frivolity, slothful habits and evil tempers. I believe, indeed, that it makes hard things easy, and irksome things pleasant.

Besides this, I believe it is not possible for any one who has been favored with a religious education, to resist for seven years the convictions of conscience, to suffer all the impressions made by sermons, the admonitions of friends, and good books, to wear off, without such an effect being produced in stilling the conscience and hardening the heart, as to render the whole business of religion, so far as it depends on our own efforts, unspeakably more difficult than it would have been SEVEN YEARS AGO.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

**** ****

## II.

### GOVERNMENT OF THE THOUGHTS.

THERE is a prevailing desire in the minds of many young people to be freed from the restraints of authority;—an impatience for that period to

arrive when they shall be at liberty to direct their own actions. It is not, perhaps, very uncommon for them to imagine that they should be more willing even to do right—that it would be easier, and far more agreeable—if it were no longer a matter of constraint, but of choice.

To any who may have entertained such ideas, I would propose a method by which they may already ascertain their powers of self government; and direct them to a sphere of action, which, whatever their present circumstances may be, is subject to no external control; where parents, tutors, friends, have no dominion; where they are already emancipated from every outward restraint. Here then they may try their strength and prove their skill; and if they fail here, it is but reasonable to conclude that they would be, at least, equally unsuccessful, if entrusted with the direction of their own conduct.

But in what way, it may be asked, are persons whose time, pursuits, actions, whose very recreations are in a measure regulated by others, at liberty to command themselves? There are, indeed, several ways in which this question might be profitably answered; but we shall at present confine ourselves to one, and reply—*Thought is free.* Here is a boundless field, over which the youngest and most strictly guarded possesses unlimited dominion. Here the eye of the most watchful friend cannot penetrate. At the very

moment that a child is gratifying a parent's feelings by some *act* of obedience, the *thoughts* may be so employed as would incur his severest displeasure. There is but One whose eye discerns "the thoughts and intents of the heart;" and a lively recollection of *that* eye being ever present, beholding and recording all that passes within, would, indeed, supersede every other consideration.

Here then, let the proud spirit, impatient of control, and confident of his strength to resist temptation and avoid danger, begin to exercise his self-command. And here let the modest and ingenuous, who cheerfully submit to wholesome restraint and parental guidance, give double diligence in guarding and regulating that to which parental authority cannot extend.

All self-government begins here. He who cannot command his *thoughts*, must not hope to control his *actions*. The smallest attention to our own minds must convince us that the thoughts require restraint. If left to pursue their own course, they will assuredly take a wrong one. Three different descriptions of thought might be mentioned, closely indeed connected with each other, but which generally, perhaps, occur in the following order:—*idle* thoughts, *vain* thoughts, and *wicked* thoughts.

*Idle* thoughts are those which ramble wantonly about the mind, ranging from one object to

another, just as they will, without any effort being made to divert them into a useful channel. It might afford a profitable illustration of our meaning, if the train of thought passing through the mind of a young lady, for instance, while sitting for an hour alone at her work-table, could be taken down as it occurs.—Perhaps she would herself be startled to peruse the motley record. Or should she be disposed to plead in her excuse that it was rather silly than sinful, let her remember, that "the thought of foolishness is sin." It is not said the thought of *wickedness*, but the thought of *foolishness*. And it is so, because it wastes time and talents which might be profitably employed, and for which we must render an account. It is not sufficient that the hands are occupied, the mind may be idle whilst they are busy; and how much mischief and misery may be traced to indolence of mind! Thought is the chief prerogative of our being; the great means of ennobling and reforming it: it makes the grand distinction between the man and the brute. And yet, would it be paying too high a compliment to the capacities of the linnet or the lapdog, (who we may suppose to be the aforesaid young lady's companions at her work-table,) to presume that the train of ideas or sensations, passing through their brains at the same time, would be at least as well worthy of note as those of their mistress? I would gladly amuse my readers with the alter-

nate cogitations of the lapdog, the linnet, and the lady; but being unwilling to hazard a conjecture with regard to the two former, I leave them to furnish those of the latter for themselves. If "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," it is no less true of idle thoughts. They are the first means he employs to ensnare us: of them we are not much afraid, and therefore are easily led on to the next step, which is short and easy indeed.

By *vain* thoughts, we may understand those wilful excursions of the imagination, those airy visions of future happiness, (as improbable as they are indeed undesirable,) which, it is to be feared, are by many, not only admitted, but encouraged. If any young persons should yield to this kind of mental indulgence, under the idea of its being a harmless amusement, it can only be for want of observation of their own minds, or for want of sufficient experience of its consequences. Its effects on the mind are much the same as those of intemperance on the body; enfeebling its powers, rendering every present occupation insipid—every duty dry, and creating a distaste for all mental improvement; at the same time that it cherishes the love of self, and blunts every benevolent and generous sentiment. Nor is it too much to say, that an habitual indulgence of these visionary pleasures is absolutely incompatible with religious improvement. The mind, whose

favorite employment is forming plans and wishes for possessing the pleasures, honors, riches, vanities of this world, cannot be seeking, "*first*, the kingdom of God;" cannot be "hungering and thirsting after righteousness;" cannot have "fixed its affections on things above." Well then might David exclaim, "I hate *vain* thoughts, but thy law do I love." He knew that to love both was impossible, for he sets them in direct opposition to each other.

It is not necessary to describe, and we hope not needful to warn our readers against the last mentioned kind: indeed, if the two former be carefully guarded against, and dismissed from the mind as soon as they enter, there will be little danger that *wicked* thoughts should gain admission. But let none hope to escape even from these, if license be given to the others. The distance and difference between *vain* and *wicked* thoughts, is much less than may be imagined; it is but another step, a step soon and easily, and often unconsciously taken. Who then will dispute that "the thought of foolishness is sin!"—Who but has need to watch and pray that they enter not into this temptation!

If a habit of indulging vain and sinful thoughts be so injurious to the moral and intellectual powers, how healthful, how desirable is a well-regulated mind, which has acquired such a command

over itself, as to be able to call off the thoughts instantly from unprofitable wanderings, and fix them on useful and important subjects! Youth is the time for forming this habit: if neglected then, it will, in after life, be by painful laborious efforts only, that the mind can be brought to profitable reflection and meditation; from which it will be ever liable to be diverted by every trifle that presents itself to the senses.

All mental superiority originates in habits of *thinking*. A child, indeed, like a machine, may be made to perform certain functions by external means; but it is only when he begins to *think* that he rises to the dignity of a rational being. Are we at a loss for subjects of improving and interesting thought? O, look around! regard the heavens above and the earth beneath. The wonders and beauties of nature are of themselves inexhaustible sources of delightful contemplation. That must be a low, frivolous mind, in which a glance at the starry heavens excites no interest, no curiosity, no admiration, no reverence for the great Creator. Many of our employments (and this remark especially applies to female employments) are happily of such a nature, as to leave the mind at liberty. Let no one imagine that she is not responsible for the manner in which that liberty is used. While the useful needle is performing its humble functions, what a noble

privilege it is, that the mind may be engaged in the grandest pursuits that can occupy an intelligent being!

Why is it that so many who acknowledge generally the supreme importance of religion, yet from year to year *neglect* that great salvation? It is for want of thought. Idle and vain thoughts are the "weeds which spring up and choke" every good impression; and prevent all serious reflection. Oh, we should be ashamed to mention the *trifles* that, it is to be feared, occupy hours and years of eager, anxious thought, and cause such subjects as death, heaven, and eternity, to appear dull, insipid, and unimportant! let our young readers inquire for *themselves* to what themes their thoughts most gladly and naturally recur. And happy, happy they, who, after such an investigation can sincerely exclaim, "O how love I *thy* law; it is my *meditation* all the day!"

Let none be discouraged from attempting to acquire the right regulation of their thoughts, by the difficulties they may have to encounter. Habit will render that easy and delightful, which, at first, appears dry and difficult. The mind will gradually become enlarged and ennobled; will feel disgusted at the trifles which used to satisfy it, and aspire to pursuits and pleasures of the highest order. To be prepared for the great change—meetened for a world of intellectual and

spiritual enjoyment, will then appear to us the grand concern of life, the "one thing needful." Then shall we be able to say with the Psalmist, I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."

## III.

### FASHIONS FOR OCTOBER.

'Be clothed with humility,' and have 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.'

This is the most graceful, becoming, and, at the same time, novel costume that has ever solicited public patronage. The mantle is of the most exquisite hue and delicate texture; tastefully decorated with the above-mentioned costly brilliants; and will be found to unite every advantage of utility and elegance. This dress is suitable to all seasons, and is considered equally becoming to the young and the old. It possesses extraordinary durability; is less liable to take a soil than any other material, and retains its freshness and novelty to the last. It falls over the person in the most graceful folds; and is so adjusted as to veil every blemish, and set off the least favorable figure to the best possible advantage. The color usually preferred for this costume is

invisible green, which casts the most delicate shade upon the whole form, and produces an effect indescribably agreeable and prepossessing. Nothing can be more tastefully imagined, than the ornament with which this mantle is finished; and although this jewel is pronounced by the best judges to be of immense value, it may be obtained upon very reasonable terms. It is so delicate in its hue, and so chaste and simple in its workmanship, that it has been mistaken, by unskilful observers, for an ordinary pebble: but connoisseurs instantly recognise it, and allow it to be "*more precious than rubies.*" Notwithstanding the many recommendations it possesses, this dress has never become common, although universally approved. It was once worn as a royal robe, and has ever since been held in high estimation and general use, amongst the subjects of the great Prince who first introduced it.

---

The figurative language of the Bible will always allow of the most plain, and practical interpretation. When our Lord, for instance, relates the parable of the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who sold all that he had to obtain one of great price, we are not to regard it as an entertaining fable. Its meaning is plainly this,—that eternal life is of such incalculable value, that it is infinitely worth while to part with every thing which must be sacrificed to its attainment. The mer-

chant sold his all to gain one pearl; for, by this means, he would abundantly enrich himself: he acted wisely therefore, for "the children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light." In like manner, whatever we may resign of present pleasure or advantage with a view to our eternal welfare, will prove so unspeakably advantageous in the end, that nothing but the grossest blindness and inattention to our own interests, could make us unwilling to do so.

The language of the apostle Peter, quoted above, is no less plain and practical in its import. The apparel he recommends, is no fancy dress which we are not really expected to wear. On the contrary, we may—we *must*, if we are Christians, be thus clothed with humility, and have this ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Some of our young readers would probably hear with considerable interest, that the most becoming dress and the most brilliant jewels ever worn, were offered for their acceptance. Now, this is truly the case. Clothed with humility, and adorned with a meek and quiet spirit, they would be more richly attired than in the most costly array. Who then will turn away disappointed from such a gift, and think some sparkling bauble more desirable! Oh! remember in whose sight this ornament is of "great price." It is well to pause and reflect closely upon such an assertion. Many such passages of Scripture are, it is to be feared, passed

over with slight attention, so that their force and beauty are little perceived. Many, perhaps, who spend some precious hours every day in reflection upon their outward docorations, have never stopped to meditate upon this striking declaration—*in the sight of* God *of great price.* He who forms the most accurate and impartial estimate of the true and comparative value of all things, He who formed and gave their lustre to those shining gems we so greatly admire, is fully aware of whatever beauty and value they possess. Yet, He says, "*not* with gold, and pearls, and costly array," but "with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." It is not our present intention, to enter upon that part of the subject to which the words just quoted would afford so suitable a text: nor to inquire how far the expression "not with gold and pearls," &c. may be supposed to imply a direct prohibition of a showy style of attire. That they condemn that excessive attention paid to appearance which so greatly prevails among professing Christians, cannot, however, be doubted. But our present purpose is to recommend "that inward adorning of the mind," which is here described. Indeed, there is little fear, that they who eminently shine with these internal graces, will be prone to excess in external decoration. Humility, whose chief characteristic it is to be contented to pass without attracting observation, will surely seldom be found excessively

arrayed in those ornaments which expressly invite it. There may be some, however, who, though not destitute of this Christian grace, yet conform too much to the customs of those around them, merely from the want of a due consideration of the subject.

"Be ye clothed with humility." There is grace in the very word; an attraction, which they who feel not, must be as destitute of true taste as of right principle. There is no age to which it does not belong; but to the young, how eminently becoming! Humility is the very foundation of Christianity; we must be abased, before we can be exalted; and our highest exaltation must, at last, consist in the depth of our humiliation. He who is the "High and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," exhibited, during the whole period of his abode on earth, a perfect pattern of this virtue. He not only "was found in fashion as a man," but "took upon him the form of a servant;" and let us remember, that he set us this example in order "that we might follow his steps." When we are conscious of the swellings of pride, or the risings of vanity, let us think of the Lord Jesus Christ,—endeavor to realize his appearance, his manner, and to ascertain what conduct or feelings he would display or recommend on the present occasion. Above all, let us remember,—however we may imagine the secret workings of our vain hearts to be concealed from those around us, (though even

this is rarely the case,) that His eye beholds them all, and with what sentiments we are fully informed; "the Lord resisteth the proud;" "the proud He knoweth afar off."

Be ye *clothed* with humility: there is a peculiar beauty in this figure. It is to cover us completely, like a garment, and without it we must never appear. This simple attire need fear no injury. A person walking the streets in delicate and costly clothing, is perpetually in danger of its being soiled and torn; while another, in plain garments, may go about without fear of inconvenience from the common accidents to which he is exposed. So a vain, showy mind is continually exposed to pain and mortification, from which one of a humble unassuming temper is perfectly secure. The freedom, ease, and tranquillity he enjoys can, indeed, scarcely be conceived of by those of an opposite spirit. And the garments of humility are armor as well as clothing. They form an invulnerable covering, which malice itself cannot penetrate

> "He that is down need fear no fall,
> He that is low no pride;
> He that is humble ever shall
> Have God to be his guide."

Bunyan's shepherd boy sang sweetly when he sang thus.

And what is this ornament on which we ought to set so high a value?—A meek and quiet spirit. O, what a different world ours would be, if this

heavenly jewellery were to become fashionable! but alas! how rarely do we see it worn! we hear much outcry of wrong, insult, ingratitude. The peace of every private circle is interrupted, more or less, by some petty contention. And here is a simple means which would heal every breach, calm every storm, allay every irritation. There is a certain temper called *spirit* in some young people, which is altogether opposed to meekness and quietness. The very terms, indeed, would probably excite in them a smile of contempt. But this would only prove them to be unacquainted with the nature of true dignity and real manliness. That the most perfect dignity of character and manner is consistent with these virtues was eminently manifested in Him who was, beyond all others, "meek and lowly in heart." That *spirit* which is by some so greatly admired, would upon investigation, be found to be made up of the most mean and pitiful qualities, and to proceed from a contemptible species of vanity. But, can it be necessary to insist on the excellence of those tempers which the Bible itself recommends? Can that be mean, unmanly, or of small value, which, in the sight of God, is of great price!

Every word of God is true. It is therefore true, however reluctantly we may be disposed to admit it, that even a child, who subdues a rising fit of passion, or submits patiently to some little grievance that he felt disposed to resist, is "greater than he that taketh a city."

Do we need other inducements to cultivate this temper? Let us make the trial for one day; let us be peaceable, meek, forbearing, submissive; determining not to be provoked by provocation; and remark, if that day will not be more productive of happiness to ourselves, as well as to all around us, than another in which rights have been maintained, privileges asserted, insults returned, and wrongs, ever so successfully, revenged. This, indeed, must be the case, because holiness and happiness, our duty and our interest, are inseparably connected.

Let our young readers then, while they wisely repress that inordinate attention to external decoration which so generally prevails, be ambitious to win and wear this choice array, these precious ornaments. Let them "learn of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, and they shall find peace in their consciences, and rest to their souls."

## IV.

### THE USE OF BIOGRAPHY.

THAT "what man has done man may do," is a most stimulating and encouraging truth. It is this consideration chiefly, that renders the lives of individuals who have distinguished themselves,

in their day and generation so interesting to their fellowcreatures: and it is a remark which should be borne in mind, whether we are studying the actions of *great good men*, or of *clever bad men*. In the former case, we should inquire whether we are not possessed of the same qualities, powers, and opportunities, (generally speaking) with which they were favored; and in the latter, that we partake of the same depraved nature, and are liable to the same temptations that led them astray. It is not the history of other beings,—of those above or below us in the scale of intelligence; it is neither of angels nor brutes, but of men like ourselves that we read.

It is a common remark, that biography is one of the most useful studies to which we can apply; but we must remember, that its usefulness, to us, entirely depends upon our right application of it. It is idle indeed, to take up a book of any kind, merely with a view to entertainment; we hope our readers are all of them, by this time, above so childish a practice: but it is possible to read with a general desire to derive benefit, and yet without that close, personal application of it to ourselves, which alone is likely to do us good. We would therefore recommend, especially to the reader of biography, to keep one grand object in view; and to make this close inquiry whenever such a volume is opened—In what respects is this applicable to me?—How can I make it sub-

servient to my own improvement? We shall endeavor to offer some suggestions that may assist the reader in this inquiry.

Suppose that a young person in the quiet and humble walks of life should meet with the annals of some great warrior or statesman;—he would probably say, "This is nothing to me, except as mere amusement; I have no ambition, at least I have no talents or opportunities to distinguish myself in public life; I am quite contented with my humble lot; I seek not great things for myself." Herein, indeed, he would show his wisdom; and yet it might not be true that such a history was nothing to him. Whatever is in itself excellent, is worthy of our attention, and more or less of our imitation, however widely our circumstances may differ. Great talents and splendid achievements are necessarily confined to a few; and as we may be virtuous and happy without them, this is not to be regretted: but it is the duty and interest of every individual to aim at excellence, in his own sphere, however humble: and while it may be the farthest from our wishes or our duty to engage in public services, it may still be highly to our advantage to trace the steps, and to mark the progress, by which great men have arrived at eminence. Many of the very same qualities are requisite to make a good tradesman, or skilful mechanic, which are needed to form a great statesman or general.

We shall probably find that such a man was early distinguished from the frivolous or dissolute around him by devotedness to his object: that he made it his study, his pleasure; not merely engaging in it as a matter of course, or of necessity. We shall find that he was not discouraged by difficulties, but rather stimulated by them to more vigorous efforts; that he never consulted his own ease or gratification, when they stood in the way of his grand design: that he was characterized by a disregard to trifles of all sorts, and by a steady aim at the most important ends. Now as these, among other good qualities, ensured to him success and distinction, so we may be assured that the same causes will produce the same effects, in whatever situations they are applied. Thus far a little apprentice-boy may learn of Peter the Great; and become, by and by, as distinguished in his trade as the Czar was in his empire.

When we read the lives of distinguished persons, we are generally struck with the lamentable mixture of mean qualities and bad actions which sullied the glory of their highest achievements. In the whole history of mankind, there are but a very few exceptions to this remark. From which we may learn, not to envy that eminence of rank or talent, which so peculiarly exposes to temptation. At the same time it should make us watchful of ourselves; since, if men thus

eminently gifted, and possessed of such gigantic powers, had not wisdom sufficient to govern their passions, nor strength to resist temptation, what need must there be for us to guard against the danger! For although it frequently appears that clever men are wicked men, it by no means follows that to be wicked one must needs be clever; on the contrary it is often seen that persons of the weakest intellect sink into the lowest degrees of vice.

From the lives of distinguished bad men, we may see the small value, in themselves, of those shining qualities which dazzle mankind. What is genius without virtue!—it is but a splendid curse; proving still more baneful to the individual himself, than to those within the sphere of his influence. But in tracing the career of men distinguished alike by their talents and their vices, it is especially profitable to observe the gradual steps by which they arrived at the height, or rather the depth of their notoriety. There was a time when Nero appeared amiable and humane. Let us not, therefore, conclude, that we shall never be guilty of a crime, because we now shrink from the thought of it; but rather, if we find that we have not resolution to resist the small temptations of the present moment, let us remember that we are in the high road to vice, although as yet but at its commencement. It is presumption and ignorance of ourselves to imagine, that the power

of resistance will increase with the strength of temptation. By such self-deception some once promising characters have become the tyrants and scourges of society: from their example, we should learn, "when we think we stand, to take heed lest we fall."

But, if so much inprovement may be derived from the history of bad men, and of others who have eminently possessed "the wisdom of this world," how much more profitable must it be to study the lives of those who became "wise unto salvation"—who were good and great in the truest sense of the words? Our libraries are richly furnished with such profitable records; and the young reader is amply supplied with animating accounts of those of his own age, who had the courage to "come out and be separate" from a vain world. But are we not too apt to read the lives of eminent Christians with the same feeling of *distance*, as those of heroes and philosophers? as though the higher attainments of holiness were as much beyond our reach as the gifts of genius. This is a common, but lamentable mistake, proceeding not from humility, but indolence, although perseverance and industry will in a great degree supply the want of great abilities, yet genius, it must be acknowledged, is so far a gift of nature, that it cannot be acquired by our own endeavors; but this is not the case with regard to "the wisdom which is from above." Hence

Christian biography is all *encouragement;* and it is only sinful sloth which tempts us to say, "I can never hope to make such attainments in religion as others." Here ambition is sanctified; and here to be contented with mediocrity is dangerous indeed. By what means does it appear, that these "burning and shining lights" arrived at such eminence in their profession? were they not such as are in the power of every reader, however humble in station, mean in intellect, or young in years?—is it not invariably by watchfulness and diligence, by self-denial, fervent prayer, and giving up the world;—in other words, by being deeply in earnest in religion, that these "best gifts" are attained? Let us not then merely envy the attainments of those we read of, but with a holy ambition resolve to emulate their graces. There is no obstacle in the way but our own unwillingness. It is true that, like every other good, this degree of growth in grace must be given from above; but this surely is not a hindrance, but the highest possible advantage. "He giveth more grace" to those who desire more; and they who ask "will assuredly receive." To young readers, the encouragements and inducements are especially great: because their course is but beginning, and it is yet for them to determine in what way to direct it; now they may either become like stars of the first magnitude, or sink to the level of those common, careless,

doubtful characters, who live in worldliness, and die without comfort.

Closely connected with this subject, is that department of religious reading, which has proved very edifying to many, and with which our young readers are frequently presented; we refer to obituaries. In reading the *lives* of individuals, we observe various situations wherein they are placed, in which it is highly improbable we shall ever follow them. But in accounts of the *deaths* of our fellow creatures, we are intimately interested; since it is a scene through which we must certainly ourselves pass; and to read such records without a deep, thoughtful impression of that fact is folly indeed.—We too, must die; and as we know not how soon, it behoves us immediately to inquire what reason there is to suppose that we should enjoy the same tranquillity and hope on a dying pillow, as we frequently read of. The agonizing doubts of a death-bed repentance, call loudly to those yet in health to "remember their Creator before those evil days come." While the cheerful hope of those whose youthful and healthful days were devoted to him;—whom sickness and death found "watching," should stimulate us to "be also ready;" especially as the many early deaths that are continually recorded, prove, that we know not at what hour the angel of death may come; with some it is "at cock-crowing and in the morning."

## V.

### ON IMPRESSIONS.

Theodore, in high health and spirits, was engaged in boyish sports with his companions, when he was summoned to attend the death-bed of a favorite friend, a lad of his own age, who had been, from his infancy, his intimate associate. He was suddenly seized with an acute disease; and, in a few hours, all hope of recovery being over, he expressed a wish to take a last leave of his friend Theodore.

Theodore entered the darkened chamber with a trembling step; and with mingled feelings of awe, grief, and terror, approached the bed of death. The curtain was undrawn, and when he beheld the altered countenance, and heard the feeble accents of his dying companion, this, thought he, is a scene I shall never, never forget! His friend's failing strength allowed him to speak but a few words; but they were words of high import. "Theodore," he said, "a very little time ago I was strong and well, as you are; now I am dying! O, that my short life had been better improved! Oh, that I had thought more of eternity, and been better prepared for it! I cannot say all I would: but learn from me, how uncertain life is, and remember that religion is 'the one thing needful!'"

his energy began to relax; he yielded to this and the other excuse; forgot the book that had stimulated him; and was soon just about as studious as before he read it.

Although Theodore was by no means an undutiful son, yet there were times, when, if his parents thwarted his wishes, he would put on a sullen look, and give a short answer. At length his mother was laid on a bed of sickness; she became so extremely ill, that they feared she would not recover: and now he was in the deepest distress: he knelt by her bed side; lamented in bitterness, that he had ever spoken an unkind word to her; and resolved, and promised, that if she did but recover, she should never have to complain of it again. At last she began to amend. Theodore was rejoiced; he attended her with the greatest tenderness, and flew to execute all her commands. And yet, when she was quite well, the very first time that she had occasion to reprove him, he returned her a frowning look, and sullen answer.

Once, in walking out with his father, he was taken into a wretched cottage, where a poor sick man and ten small children were without bread. They were half naked, and seemed perishing for want of food and fire. Theodore's heart yearned at the sight: the eldest was a lad of his own size; but what a difference! as he stood beside him, and compared his own comfortable dress—his

bright boots, warm great coat, and neat appearance, with that poor shivering lad's ragged jacket, and bare feet, he felt ashamed of having squandered many an idle shilling, that would have done so much good here, on trifling gratifications for himself. "And there are thousands," thought he, "besides these, enduring the same want and hardship." He immediately emptied his pockets for their relief; and when he returned home to a blazing fire and good dinner, he hoped he should never again be unmindful of the miseries of the poor. But amid other scenes, the wretched cottage was soon forgotten; and his next month's allowance was spent as it had usually been.

It was the Sunday after new-year's day: and Theodore went in the evening, with his brothers and sisters, to hear a sermon to young people. The text was, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." The minister spoke in a very impressive, affectionate manner; he made the most searching address to their consciences, —the most lively appeal to their feelings. The place was crowded; the prayers, the hymns were suitable and affecting; attention was excited; tears were shed; and Theodore's flowed among the rest. The service closed, and he secretly exclaimed, "The Lord shall be the guide of my youth, and my portion forever." He returned home; wept, prayed; called to mind his conduct.

in the past year; how his resolutions had failed; how impressions had worn off: he thought again of his deceased friend; and felt thankful that, although a cumberer of the ground, he had been spared yet another year. He thought of "the sins and follies of his childhood and youth;" then of the swift passage of life; how short a time it seemed since the last new year; and how one after another would thus pass away, and bring him certainly and soon to the end of life; "Let me then redeem the precious time," said Theodore, "now, before those evil days come! Let me begin this new year well; let it be spent better than the last!" Thus he retired to rest in a serious spirit.

He arose briskly the next day. It was a fine, bright, cheerful Monday morning, and Theodore, in high spirits, ran off to skate on the river. Thus the morning was spent, and in the evening he went to meet a large party of young people. Several days passed in similar diversions, till, by the time he returned to his usual pursuits, when he thought to have put his good resolutions in practice, he had almost forgotten that it was a new year. There was nothing that made it appear to differ from the old one: things therefore went on with Theodore much as usual; nor does it seem very probable that the present year will afford him less painful reflections than the last.

Now, should any reader be surprised at this

recital, and consider it as an extraordinary instance of levity and thoughtlessness, we would request him to pause for a moment; to examine his own heart; and to recollect his own experience. To whom have not some similar events occurred? On whom have not similar impressions been made? Few are so young, but that they also have been alarmed by the death of some associate; few so insensible, as not to have felt it as a solemn warning. Who among them has not been stimulated, at times, to unusual exertion in their pursuits, by the animating example of others; or by some quickening motive? Have not many of them, upon the sickness or death of some dear relation, felt the pangs of remorse at not having fulfilled "the law of kindness" towards them? Who has not felt occasional self-reproach when witnessing the sufferings of the poor, and formed fresh resolutions to assist them? Who, on those returning seasons, which more particularly remind us of the flight of time, and of the brevity of life, has not resolved to commence a new course, and to walk thenceforward in the pleasant and peaceful paths of heavenly wisdom? And oh! which of our readers has not many, many a time, felt lively convictions under the preaching of faithful ministers, and felt their word to be "quick and powerful?" But have these impressions, in every instance, been lasting? This is the question which each must answer satisfactorily for himself,

before he should cast one stone of censure at Theodore. Alas! how many *Monday mornings* witness such fading impressions! How often does it happen that before the grass begins to spring—before a single flower blooms on the grave where we wept and resolved, that the eye that wept, and the heart that promised, are again fixed upon a vain world!

But now, let us inquire, why is it so? At the distance of two or three months from some painful bereavement, some solemn warning, are those considerations which then so deeply impressed us less true, less momentous? No: while "the cares and the pleasures of this life" spring up like weeds, and cause those impressions to die away, all these great realities remain unchanged. There lie the dead in their silent graves! Their spirits, whose flight we at first attempted, in thought, to pursue, still exist in that unknown world:—at this—at every moment—whatever trifle is engaging us, they, at the same instant, are feeling, thinking—conscious either of unspeakable pleasure, or inconceivable regret. We may be trifling, we may be running into temptation, and eager in the pursuit of sin; but, in the meantime, it is as true as when we are most disposed to remember it, that, "There is a heaven above," and that, "There is a dreadful hell."

Our Bible may remain unopened for days, for weeks; but during those days and weeks, the words

therein written are as true, as important, as when we are reading them attentively. Let it be but opened, and at all times we shall meet the reproof, the exhortation, the promise. The Bible never ceases to say, (whether we hear or forbear,) "What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And thus, every motive that urges us to what is right, remains, in itself, equally forcible and persuasive, when we have forgotten, as when we remember it.

Now, what is the course of wisdom? Are we, then, some may perhaps inquire, to feel habitually that gloom, and dread, and sorrow, which we experience, when surrounding a death-bed, or are weeping over the grave! Are these impressions never to wear off? And is our return to the cheerful engagements of life, and of our age forbidden? It can scarcely be needful to reply, that this is not the lesson to be conveyed. Gloom and sorrow will, indeed, occasionally overwhelm the mind in this dying world; and the "house of mourning is better than the house of mirth;" yet melancholy is far from being the feeling natural to a good man. Cheerfulness and serenity in the diligent discharge of the duties of life, characterize the true Christian. But our moral is this, that wisdom consists in *being habitually influenced by those considerations which are more powerfully suggested on particular occasions.* If we feel in the chamber of sickness, and by the side

of the grave, that life is uncertain, death inevitable, and that heaven or hell must be our certain destination; let us ever after act upon that conviction. And let it be thus with every other impression that we know to be just. If our hearts have melted at the occasional sight of poverty and misery, let us not go away and forget that the destitute and the miserable are still suffering: "the poor ye have always with you;" let us then always remember them.

Consider what a happy state of energy and diligence, of zeal, and of charity, we should maintain, if the accumulated force of every motive, of every impression we have received, were constantly pressing upon our minds. The same sense of the value of life—the same motives to diligence and activity, to affection, and to benevolence, to the improvement of time, to the preparation for eternity. And then remember, that these inducements are, in themselves, every moment as strong, and the things to which they relate as true as if this were the case. We could not, indeed, constantly sustain so powerful a stimulus; but it is in our power always to recollect it. This is the use we should make of *impressions*.

New-year's day is now past: but is it therefore less important to redeem the time, and put our good resolutions in practice, than it was on that day? It is rather more so, because the year is

now shortened by one considerable division of it. Let us then, conscious of the weakness and the volatility of our hearts, and of the frailty of resolutions made in our own strength, look up to Him who, "to them who have no might," has promised to increase strength; who will, if implored, confirm our wavering minds, and establish our weak resolutions. Finally, may we be permitted to ask, has the perusal of this paper produced any *impression*? Has it, dear reader, called to your remembrance any seasons of seriousness and diligence, that have since passed away "like the early dew?" If so, endeavor and pray that it may not be so in this instance; resolve that this, at least, shall be a permanent IMPRESSION.

## VI.

"HER WAYS ARE WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS."

Prov. iii. 17.

THIS beautiful passage of Scripture sounds very familiarly to us. It is one of those texts so frequently quoted, and so often referred to, that much of its effect is lost upon us unless we meditate upon it closely, and take pains to enter into its meaning. Let us endeavor to do so on the

present occasion; by considering the passage—first, as the declaration of God himself; secondly, as that of Solomon.

First—This is a declaration of the word of God; and all his words are true. Now we shall do well to regard it in this light, when we are tempted to consider the ways of religion, to which the passage refers, as any thing rather than what they are here described to be: that "her paths are *peace*," we are perhaps, at all times ready to admit: we know and feel, even the youngest of us, that there is no true peace—no peace of mind and of conscience, but in the paths of holiness. But *pleasant* is a term we are wont to apply to things of a very different nature.—We meet agreeable and entertaining company, and call them *pleasant* people :—those who have been spending some hours in the gay amusements of this world, will tell you they have had a *pleasant* evening:—but do we say with the same emphasis and feeling of God's house and ordinances, and of the society of his people, that they are *pleasant*? Are there not many, on the contrary, who, if they spoke the language of their hearts, would use a term directly opposite in describing them? although they might allow that these things are right, safe, expedient, and even necessary. On such then—should there be any of our readers, who may, in their secret thoughts, entertain these ideas of the good ways of religion, we would

earnestly press the words of the text as the words of God. He says "her ways are ways of *pleasantness*." And let us remember, that this expression is addressed to us *as we are*. It is not spoken to angels, nor to "the spirits of the just made perfect;" but to us, in our present state; and more especially to the young, with all their earthly tastes, fascinating pleasures, and ardent pursuits. And He who asserts it is no stranger to the human heart; he knows, intimately, its passions and propensities, and in what things it is prone to seek satisfaction. Nor let us imagine that He who so exactly estimates the true value of all things, in any degree underrates the worth of earthly good.

We are delighted with many things in this world; and He who gives us all things richly to enjoy, is fully aware of the pleasure they are calculated to produce. He is also perfectly acquainted with the averseness and distaste we are prone to feel towards Himself and His ways: but still he says of them that *they* are ways of *pleasantness*. How then are we to reconcile this unqualified declaration of God, with the secret persuasion of so many, perhaps of our own hearts also, that they are not so? What conclusion must be drawn but this—even that it is—it *must* be as God has said; and that, whoever may deny or doubt it, His ways *are* ways of pleasantness. They who think otherwise, only prove that they have never made a fair

trial of them; have never set out in earnest in the way to Zion; but only viewed the road from an obscure distance; from whence they may discover the hills of difficulty, but can perceive neither the fruits nor flowers that adorn it. While they who are indeed travelling that road, unite with one heart and voice in corroborating the divine declaration. And this brings us to the second view we proposed to take of the subject, as the assurance and the experience of king Solomon.

Now, as he himself elsewhere remarks, there could not possibly be a person selected from all the kingdoms and ages of the world, so well qualified to decide upon the truth of this statement as himself; because he had made trial more than any man before or after him, of every other kind of pleasantness. Read his own account of the matter in that rare description of worldly prosperity which he has left upon record in the 2nd chapter of Ecclesiastes; and which is afterwards summed up in these memorable words—" So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do: and behold,

all was vanity and vexation of spirit; and there was no profit under the sun.—Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.—*Her* ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

Now, which of us can expect to ensure so large a share of earthly good?—"what can the man do that cometh after the king?" We should, then, only betray our ignorance and weakness if we still secretly indulged the idea, that, notwithstanding all Solomon and the Bible may say, this world is a sufficient portion; and that it will not prove vanity and vexation of spirit to us. Let us remember, that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived; and shall we venture to set up *our* judgment in opposition to *his*? Besides, this is not the language of Solomon only; but of every human being, who has arrived at the same period of life. That all here is vanity and vexation of spirit, is a confession reluctantly extorted even from "men of the world, who have their portion in it." Or, if they will not avow it in words, it is a truth indelibly expressed in their countenances. While the same acknowledgement is cheerfully made by good men: All here indeed, is vanity and vexation, they say, but this does not afflict us, because our portion is not here; this is not our rest; but we know where to look for solid satisfaction. It is by such considerations that Solomon consoles himself for the disappointments

he experienced in his earthly pursuits.—He, at last, discovers, that it is only in wisdom's ways that happiness can be found:—this was *his* experience. Thus then we see, that the wisest and most experienced of men, and the unerring word of God, agree in assuring us, that the ways of religion, and they only, are ways of *pleasantness.*

Let us then inquire, how it is that they are so; and endeavor to reconcile the statement, with some appearances that seem to contradict it. "Godliness," the apostle tells us, "has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come." That is, the true Christian really participates with others, in the moderate enjoyment of earthly good; and has, over and above, the blessing of God, which alone "maketh rich without adding sorrow." While they who would grasp at more than the holy law of God allows, though they may experience some momentary gratification, yet, in fact, depart from happiness in the same proportion; and even their lawful enjoyments are without the sunshine of his favor. But more especially, they are ways of pleasantness because the truest felicity our souls are capable of proceeds from the sense of the favor of God, and communion with him. And, although in this world we cannot experience that fulness of joy which is felt in his immediate presence, yet we may partake so much of it, as far to surpass all terrestrial bliss. Some sweet springs of that

stream which makes glad the city of God, refresh this wilderness below.

But it is also said, that the paths of religion are paths of peace; then we may truly say that they are pleasant, *because* they are peaceful. What real enjoyment can there be without peace of mind? and "there is no peace to the wicked." "My peace," the Saviour said, "I give unto you;" not such as the world giveth, but that which passeth all understanding. It is this inward tranquillity, this well-founded sense of safety; this readiness for all changes, even for the last great change; and this meetness for another state; which alone can warrant a true enjoyment of this life. The Christian engages in his daily concerns with so sweet a persuasion of their being under the direction and blessing of his heavenly Father, that he is free from those disquieting cares and anxieties which so often cloud the brow of those who are without God in the world. He has his trials, indeed; but under the heaviest of them, he receives strong consolation from reflecting, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." In prosperity he knows that God is fulfilling his gracious promise, that to those who "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all other things shall be added." And in the midst of all, he prizes the light of his countenance lifted up upon him, more than the brightest sunshine of this world. He lies down upon his bed with the sweetest serenity, knowing that the

angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him. Is he young? The Lord then is the guide of his youth, and he hopes by "taking heed to his way, according to the word of God," to escape the dangers and temptations of an evil world. And he can look towards advancing years, to the loss of his earthly friends, and to old age itself, without dismay: because, when father and mother forsake him, the Lord has engaged to take him up. He believes also, that when he is old and gray-headed, He will be with him still. Such, then, is the peace that is experienced in the ways of religion; and is not this peace *pleasantness*?

Many of the admonitions of Solomon are addressed expressly to the young: and this, among other passages, is intended to allure them into "the good old way" in which their fathers have walked. Youth is ever eager in the pursuit of pleasure; and here it is afforded to them—true, enduring, unchangeable, and ever increasing pleasure. Why then should we hesitate? O, reader! "taste and see that the Lord is gracious." But, remember, you must not expect to experience the *pleasantness* of religion, without a hearty devotedness to it. That which makes the good ways of the Lord appear so uninviting is, that so many walk irregularly in them; with a heavy, balting or wandering step. But the true pilgrim, who maintains a vigorous pace, who is never diverted from his course, who "presses towards the mark," and

keeps it ever in view—he it is who experiences the *full* truth of this assertion; he "goes on his way rejoicing," and finds, indeed, that it is a "way of pleasantness, and that its paths are peace."

## VII.

### SUNDAY MORNING.

THAT is not likely to be a profitable Sabbath which is commenced without some suitable recollection, some sincere desire to improve and to sanctify it. Our first waking thoughts should be thus consecrated; should thus take possession of the mind, and pre-occupy it; otherwise those of a worldly kind will soon flow in; so that if we "do not our own works," we shall "think our own thoughts," which is as great a sin in the sight of God. But there are many reflections, (besides those more obvious ones, which are familiar to every serious mind,) that may be suggested to us by Sunday morning. Let us indulge them for a while.

This Sabbath dawns not on ourselves alone, but also on the millions of our favored land; inviting all to forget the six days, in which they have labored and done their work, and to remember this, and keep it holy. Alas! to multitudes how vain

the summons. We see that "the world still lieth in wickedness," in no respect more strikingly, than by the total neglect of this day in numberless instances; and the very mistaken and partial observance of it in many more. It is melancholy to reflect on the thousands who welcome it only as a day of indulgence, idleness, or amusement. The Sabbath sun, which ought to arouse them betimes to its sacred duties, does but witness their longer indulgence. How many who "rise early and sit up late," on other days, to attend diligently to their worldly affairs, when they awake and recollect that it is *Sunday*, resolve to have "a little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands to sleep." And when at last they arise, if they do not allow themselves to engage in the business of other days, they do but fill up the heavy hours in the meanest indulgences; in the preparation or enjoyment of a luxurious meal, in the most trifling occupations, or in absolute idleness. What can be a more melancholy sight, than that of such a wretched, ill ordered family, thus wasting the sacred hours that many are spending in the house of God.

Others rise early, indeed, but it is only in order to lengthen their holyday. How many such are now preparing to profane the Sabbath! How are the roads and fields, in almost every part of our beautiful country, disfigured by these unhallowed visitants! How are our streets thronged with Sab-

bath breakers! The doors of the houses of God are thrown wide open, and they would be welcome as well as others. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" In vain is the affectionate invitation! They pass on, resolved to have their pleasure, at whatever price.

But there is a brighter view of Sunday morning, to which it is refreshing to turn. How many are there, who have said of it, "early will I seek thee," and who, from their various and distant dwellings, have been, at the same hour, seeking in their closets a blessing on this welcome Sabbath Their united supplications, uttered in various accents, and rising from the lowly cottage, the darksome hovel, as well as from abodes of comfort and affluence, ascend together, as an acceptable morning sacrifice to the throne of grace.

Again:—see from the streets and lanes, from the courts and alleys, of our crowded cities; from the hamlets and villages, from the high-ways and hedges, what numbers of decent children now issue forth to their respective Sunday Schools! How many little feet are at the same moment pacing the streets on this blessed errand! What an innumerable multitude would they form, could the whole of them be assembled on some vast plain before our view! What an animating spectacle to teachers! But although this cannot be, imagination may, in part, enable them to realize such a sight; and every private individual, who is about

to engage in this good work, may be animated by the reflection, that however limited the sphere of their exertions, they are contributing their efforts, and doing their utmost towards the well being of this countless multitude. And this leads us to another reflection. Behold the goodly company of young people from all corners of our land, animated (as we would hope) by the same feeling, preparing to commence their Sabbath morning's employment. Every teacher, as he or she is proceeding towards the school, might be encouraged, by recollecting, how many fellow laborers there are, unknown indeed to each other, and unconnected except in this common cause, who are setting out on the same noble business. Perhaps there is no heart glowing with truer cheerfulness, gladdened with more perfect peace, than that of the pious, diligent teacher, who, having early in the closet sought a blessing on the duties and services of the day, goes forth in the strength of the Lord to engage in them.

But let us now, in thought, pursue the thousands and ten thousands, who are pacing the streets, or crossing the fields and lanes in their way to the houses of God. And could we hope that all were animated by the same motive, that all were going to listen to the same faithful truth, it would be indeed a pleasing subject of contemplation.

But we would never for a moment disguise truth in order to indulge a pleasing vision. Of

these multitudes, how many are but going to be established in error—how many to pass an idle hour—how many to satisfy their consciences with heartless forms—how many to sit careless, and unimpressed even under faithful instructions! Still, however, with all these deductions, there are *many* who are sincerely going to "pay their vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his people;" and this is a cheering reflection.

The crowded streets of a large city on a Sunday morning, may also afford another observation which should excite our liveliest gratitude. To see multitudes, of every different denomination, quietly proceeding, in open day, unmolested, and unquestioned, to their respective places of worship, is a beautiful evidence of the religious privileges we enjoy, "Every man may now sit under his own vine; and (whoever might wish to do it) none dares to make him afraid." It was not always thus in England; and when we are walking peaceably to our place of worship, we should not forget the times when our good forefathers were obliged to assemble in secret, often by night; and to hide "in dens and caves of the earth," from the rage of their persecutors. And now the voice of prayer and of praise is heard in our land. What numberless voices unite in that universal chorus which ascends, like a cloud of incense, to the heavens! This, then, is another animating reflection for Sunday morning.

But there are many who are absent from these solemnities, not by choice but necessity. Sunday morning has a peculiar aspect in a sick chamber. Those now on the bed of languishing, who have hitherto neglected their Sabbaths, view it with peculiar emotions; feel its value, and resolve, if they are restored to health, to improve these precious seasons in future. While the true Christian from his sick bed hails its cheerful beams, and hopes for a Sabbath of rest and profit even there.

Others there are, on whom this Sabbath dawns, indeed, in vain: it is the first they have passed in eternity! Let our imagination visit the many chambers of death throughout our borders. These, like ourselves, have beheld many a cheerful Sabbath sun; but now, their eyes are closed to its brightness. The beams of this fair morning have, perhaps, penetrated the gloom of their chambers, and shone upon the silent walls, but they know it not. The darkness of death has fallen upon them. Ah, then, how unspeakably important is the question, how their former Sabbaths have been improved; since there are no more of these "accepted times," these "days of salvation," for them!

But let our thoughts (already so excursive) wander from our own happy island, to distant climes; recollecting that within the passage of a few hours, the same sun that beams in so cheerfully

at the windows of our sanctuaries, and on the walls of our pleasant school-rooms, shines upon the plains of India—the wilds of Africa—the forests of America;—upon the ices of the North, and the islands of the South. That the same rays are reflected from the gilded pagodas, where the millions of China flock to their idolatrous worship;—from the mosques of the false prophet;—from the gaudy temples of India; and light up the hideous features and grotesque shapes of ten thousand idol gods, "which are no gods," in every "dark corner" of our globe. While we are illumined by the rays of the sun of Righteousness, and are instructed in "the truth as it is in Jesus," the red Indian roams the desert in search of his prey, or of his enemies: the dark Hindoo muses idly on the banks of the Ganges: far in the impenetrable regions of Africa—

"The Negro village swarms abroad to play."

The fierce Arab hunts for spoil; or follows the slow caravan of spicy merchandise across the burning sands of the desert: while, in the west, the poor negro slave toils beneath the lash of his hard task-master. Ah, then, what are the privileges of a Sabbath in England! Here and there indeed, in those benighted regions, the solitary missionary goes forth in the midst of hardship and peril, to hold up the light of truth; and would not he unite in the exclamation, surrounded as he

is by difficulties and discouragements, and say, What are the privileges of a Sabbath in England!

But now, let us return nearer home, to make a more practical reflection. This Sabbath sun that shines on the millions of the human race, beams also on *us;* "on *me*," let every reader say; and to me the question is, How *I* shall employ it?—I am not one of the open Sabbath-breakers of the land; but am I not one of the countless multitude, who while, in form, they "keep a holy day," yet, secretly, say, "What a weariness it is! When will it be over?" Or am I one of those to whom the Sabbath is a delight, who are "glad to go up to the house of the Lord." Am I a faithful, regular, zealous teacher, preparing with others to join my beloved class? Or have I never offered my services to that good work? Am I, on the contrary, spending the intervals of worship in idleness and indulgence, and attention to my dress? If so, reader, no longer, we beseech you, waste your time in pitying or despising the poor Indian and Negro: no longer censure the pleasure-taking Sabbath-breaker: let your charity begin at home; and remember, that if your Sabbaths are misimproved, you are in a far more alarming situation than the untaught savage, "who knows not his Lord's will!" Recollect, also, that the period is hastening, when the Angel of Death shall swear concerning you, that "Time," and its Sabbaths, "shall be no longer."

## VIII.

### PLEASURE AND HAPPINESS.

To see visions, and dream dreams, has been a privilege common to those (if we may credit their assertions) whose labors have been devoted to the edification of the public: and fortunate, indeed, should we account ourselves, if, instead of devoting many a weary hour to the service of our young readers, with our eyes wide open, and our pens full gallop—we could, like our more favored predecessors, answer the purpose as well, or better, by merely falling to sleep. For my own part, having no hope of such extraordinary favors, I must be content to present them with one of my waking dreams; trusting they will be able to find the interpretation thereof.

Those readers who are familiar with allegorical adventures, will not be surprised to hear that I found myself, one fine evening, on an extensive plain, thronged with persons of every age and condition; amongst the younger parts of the assembly, I was pleased to recognise some thousands of the readers of the Youth's Magazine. The crowd was in perpetual movement: many running to and fro, with an appearance of restlessness and agitation; and upon inquiry I found that they were all in quest of the same person, each expect-

ing to meet her at every turn, although they were looking in such opposite directions. The name of this person I was told, was *Happiness*. "A pretty name," thought I, and I determined to join in the pursuit. It was curious to observe the various expedients which were resorted to in order to discover her. Some were groping amid heaps of dust which they had collected from the surface of the earth; others thought she might be concealed among the daisies and buttercups that covered the plain: others walked about with vacant countenances, idly seeking her among the crowd: while a few, like myself, unconsciously sought her while observing the rest.

Our attention was at length attracted by the sound of lively music, and at the same time a gay procession was seen advancing from a distant part of the plain. As it approached, an elegant female figure was distinguished amid a train of fair attendants: her flowing robe exhibited all the colors of the rainbow; her auburn locks, entwined with wreaths of pearl and diamond, floated in the breeze: her voice was soft, her smile enchanting, and her eyes sparkled more than the brilliants on her brow. Her attendants, also, were gaily attired: they danced and sang, and strewed artificial flowers in her path. She was received with universal acclamation; for all concluded her to be the person of whom we were in search. "It can be no other than *Happiness* herself," we said; and she bowed

assent to the name. She was soon surrounded by the wondering crowd, who thronged about her in clamorous admiration. Upon a signal from their mistress, the attendant maidens opened a variety of elegant caskets and vases, which they bore in their hands, and from whence they scattered a profusion of costly gifts, toys, trinkets, and dainties, amid the scrambling crowd. When the tumult this occasioned had a little subsided, she commanded silence, and thus addressed the assembly:—

"Youths and maidens, behold one who has peculiar claims to your regard. I am devoted to your interests: I fly the infirm, the poor, and the miserable, that I may exclusively promote your gratification. I come to invite you to my palace; where every delight that my genius can invent, and my bounty bestow, is prepared for your reception: Who will follow me?" This question was answered by an instantaneous movement in the crowd; every one pressing forwards to join her standard.

It was at this moment that another graceful figure was observed advancing from an opposite part of the plain. Her step sedate and dignified, her countenance radiant and benignant. She wore a plain robe of delicate whiteness, and a simple wreath of field flowers bound her hair. All eagerly inquired her name; but our fair leader, when appealed to, declared she knew her not, having never seen her before. She would fain have led

us off without waiting to salute her; but curiosity prompted us to remain. This personage had no train of attendants; being only supported on one side by a sturdy youth, whose name, as I afterwards learned, was *Industry*; and on the other, by a maid of stately mein, called *Integrity*. It was with an air at once of noble frankness and graceful modesty, that she now introduced herself by the name of *Happiness*.

"Friends," said she, "I make no great pretensions; no such brilliant promises as those to which you have just listened; but you will find me sincere and faithful to my engagements: it is but justice to you, and to myself, that I should reveal my name, and her's who has assumed it. This is her old artifice; she always wishes to assume mine, but her real name is *Pleasure*. Many suppose that we are, at least, near of kin, and dwell under the same roof; but the truth is, that our families were never connected, and that my abode is far remote from her's. You have now only to choose whom you will follow: you have all been seeking me where I was not to be found; now if you wish, I will conduct you to my residence. It is true that now and then, a weary votary of my gay rival, after fruitless endeavors to find me in her domains, at last comes to seek me in my native valley, but the greater number of her followers never, never return. Suffer me, then, to lead you at once, to my safe and pleasant abode.

She ceased; and every face seemed agitated with painful indecision; her look, her manner, and her name interested all hearts. But during the whole of her address, *Pleasure* had ordered her music to play; the merry tambourine and tinkling cymbal, flashed over our heads; her silken banners of purple and gold, streamed in the air; the maidens recommenced their sprightly dance: while *Pleasure* herself, waving her white arm, beckoned incessantly to the crowd; till overpowered by her attractions, a very large majority of the assembly turned their backs upon *Happiness*, and rejoined the rival standard.

Even of the few who stayed, several seemed to hesitate, halting and turning incessantly to listen to the receding music; till at length, they complained that they were unable to keep pace with the quick step of *Industry;* and that they were disconcerted by the steady eye of *Integrity;* so, after making an awkward apology to *Happiness*, they deserted to the merry multitude. The small company who still remained followed her with a cheerful, determined air: and I watched the happy party as it crossed the plain, till it disappeared among the trees that shade the valley of *Happiness.*

For my own part, I resolved to follow the crowd to the palace of *Pleasure*, just to make my observations. As I reached the rear of the procession, I was really disgusted to see several hoary heads

nodding to the music, and limbs tottering after the train as fast as they were able. "Surely, thought I, these would do better to repose peacefully in the Asylum of *Happiness!*" But I presently learned, that those who have been strangers to her in early life, rarely seek her acquaintance afterwards; and that although *Pleasure* treats them with marked disrespect, they persist in pursuing her wherever she goes—the disfigurement of her pageants, and the lumber of her halls.

We soon left the green plain and its pleasant trees in the distance; and proceeded till we reached the suburbs of a large city, whose domes and spires, and crowded roofs, were just visible through the smoke and vapor. All the bells were ringing, and the streets, lit up with long rows of lamps, resounded with the rattling of wheels and the trampling of horses. At length, the magnificent palace of our leader was discovered, rising above the surrounding buildings, and richly decorated with festoons of variegated lamps. A blaze of light from brilliant chandeliers, shone from its innumerable windows; while the merry sound of the viol and all kinds of instruments, was heard from within. The halls were already thronged with visitants, and we all crowded in, eager to share the entertainment.

There have been so many descriptions of the interior of this palace, that it would be quite superfluous to repeat them: and indeed it were an

endless task. It is but justice, however, to say, that *Pleasure* had not exaggerated in her descrip tion. There were numerous suits of apartments, fitted up to suit the various tastes of the different visiters: many to regale the senses, others to delight the fancy; some, even to feast the intellect For a time, all was life and gaiety. New comers, I observed, always seemed to think that one half had not been told them: yet I could but remark, how many, after awhile, would suddenly forsake their pursuits, with looks of dissatisfaction and fatigue; and recline on sofas and couches, where they gaped and sighed, wondering why they did so. Others, with the same uneasy appearance, persisted in pacing from one apartment to another, as if in search of something that ever eluded them: and what struck me as a strange inconsistency, was, that several protested they were only come to look for *Happiness*, persuaded that she was concealed somewhere in the palace; although they had themselves seen her retire to her own quiet vale, quite in an opposite direction. Every hour increased the number of weary and discontented faces; the revelry however continued; and *Pleasure*, to do her justice, made every effort to keep up the spirits of her guests, till she herself seemed nearly exhausted with her exertions. It being now long past midnight, I began to think of retiring, for my curiosity was fully satisfied: and I went, prepared with as good an excuse as I

could devise, to pay my parting compliments to *Pleasure*, whom I found reclining on her throne, with a languid eye, and haggard countenance. She received my apologies with coldness, and expressed no wish to detain me; for it seems that *Pleasure* does not like to be looked at by any but her admirers.

Having escaped from the crowded apartments of the palace, I presently reached the outskirts of the city; where I no sooner began to inhale the fresh air, than my spirits experienced a sudden exhilaration. I breathed freely, and lost the sense of fatigue. Dawn was now breaking over the distant hills; and by the time I regained the plain whence we set out, a light, rosy tint, the pure blush of morning, was spread on every object: the lark sprang up, and commenced her merry carol over my head: a refreshing breeze gently stirred the foliage:—I felt that I was approaching the regions of *Happiness*.

I now looked about for the nearest path to the valley; which, although I had distinctly marked the evening before, I could not now readily distinguish. At this moment I was unexpectedly accosted by *Happiness* herself, who being fond of early rising, had overtaken me in her morning walk. She saluted me with a courteous smile, and offered her hand to conduct me to her residence. But at first sight I did not recollect her; my eyes had been so much dazzled by the glare of light in

the palace, that I could not see her distinctly, and even when she made herself known to me I could scarcely believe her to be the same person that I had seen a few hours before. I thought her features plain, and that she looked less cheerful and engaging; but every step we took together seemed to heighten her beauty, and to render her conversation more animating. At length we reached the valley, and I descried the white turrets of her mansion rising above the trees.

## IX.

### PLEASURE AND HAPPINESS.

"I PROMISED," said Happiness, "to lead you to my mansion; but this is the hour of morning sacrifice, and we must first repair to the altar of *Devotion*." So saying, she conducted me to a temple of the most simple architecture, where all the inhabitants of the valley were already assembled. A cloud of fragrant incense, which was the prayers of saints, curled in white wreaths among the trees, and thence ascended in a stately column to the sky. When the solemnities were concluded, *Devotion*, the priestess, with a serene brow, pronounced a benediction, and dismissed the assembly.

Withdrawing silently from the temple, we repaired to a spacious hall in the mansion, where long tables were spread, furnished abundantly with plain and wholesome provision. At these tables a healthy, handsome woman presided, called *Temperance;* who did the honors of her board with perfect grace, and with the warmest hospitality. But there was one singular custom; upon a certain signal, given by herself, every one present immediately ceased to regale; and if a cup or dish had been tasted by any of the company afterwards, it would have been considered as a personal affront to the lady herself. *Happiness* assured me, that if, on any occasion, *Temperance* chanced to be absent from her place, she herself, (being always subject to fits,) fainted at table; and could never be revived till *Temperance* brought her restoratives.

The signal being given, the whole company rose from table, and immediately repaired to their respective apartments. Those to which *Happiness* first conducted me, and which formed one extensive wing of the building, were under the superintendence of *Industry*, that brisk youth on whose arm *Happiness* leaned when I first met her; and who was, she told me, with the exception of *Devotion*, her nearest relation. This long suit of rooms was variously furnished, according to the different rank and circumstances of the inhabitants. Here were to be heard the clatter of ma-

chinery, the groans of the engine, the strokes of the hammer, and the roaring of the forge. There were to be seen the implements of husbandry, and the bustle of trade. Further on, I observed countless numbers of females, plying the busy needle. Beyond these, we reached apartments of greater elegance; over which two persons presided of remarkably interesting appearance; called *Science* and *Literature*. The former, a silver-headed sage, of a mild, venerable aspect; before whom, as we approached, I involuntarily made a low prostration. The latter, an ardent, interesting youth, with a fine eye and a pale cheek: he wore a wreath of evergreens on his temples, and was attended by all the muses. As we passed him, I turned to *Happiness*, and inquired if she did not spend the greater proportion of her time in this part of her residence. She smiled at the question, and replied, that she was prevented from showing any such partiality, by certain evil genii, which occasionally infested her domains, and which often compelled her to fly from one apartment to another, especially if she had stayed in any of them rather longer than usual. "Here, for instance," said she, "there are two or three little impertinent demons, called *Ambition*, *Envy*, and *Irritability*, who tease that poor youth sadly, and make him look so pale and wan: for my own part, I have so great an antipathy to them, that I can never stay in the same room with any of them;

so that, I assure you, I am glad, sometimes, to make my escape from these parts to go yonder and sing, among the spinning wheels. There is, however," continued she, "an amiable handmaid of *Devotion's*, of low stature, called *Humility*, who has power to charm away these intruders; and when they send her to solicit my return, she never fails to bring me back again."

She next led me to the other great wing of the building, where I observed the apartments were fitted up with the greatest attention to comfort and accommodation. Here presided a glowing, warm-hearted, interesting looking creature, called *Affection*. As we approached she smiled sweetly upon us; but there was a tear in her eye, and something of anxiety in her expression. As I looked into the many rooms which formed this division of the building, I beheld cheerful fires blazing, and small domestic circles formed around them. There were smiling mothers, with infants in their arms; and fathers, with groups of rosy children climbing their knees; there were brothers and sisters, walking hand in hand; and hoary heads reclining on youthful bosoms. "This is a pretty sight," said I; "Yes;" said *Happiness*, "and perhaps, if I had any preference, it is here that I should most frequently repose. But I must tell you, that these apartments are peculiarly subject to invasion. There is a stern matron called *Affliction*, wearing a mourning habit, who

walks up and down this gallery, and is continually turning in to one or other of the rooms: whenever she appears, I am obliged to retire; but during my absence, *Devotion*, when applied to, despatches two gentle handmaids, called *Peace* and *Resignation*, who are the most excellent substitutes I could employ. And if they are treated courteously, and made heartily welcome, it is seldom long before I show my face again: I have heard it remarked, that I never look so healthy, nor wear so cheerful a smile, as after I have been banished, for a time, by that stern matron. There are some few of these rooms, indeed, where she has been so busy, that I have never since been able to gain free admittance: I am not even invited to return: they complain that my eye is too bright, and my manners too lively; and they find *Peace* and *Resignation* more congenial associates. Yet, there are times when I steal in unperceived, behind one or other of these handmaids, and enliven the party, though they do not suspect I am there.

"But the worst enemy these apartments have to dread, is an ugly noisy fiend, called *Discord;* who occasionally crawls in through some breach, which *Charity* (whose business it is to keep the hangings in repair) has left unclosed. When this happens, I fly quite out of hearing; and cannot be prevailed upon to return, unless that kind-hearted girl comes, with an apology, to petition

for my reappearance. As to *Affliction*, I am far from regarding her as an enemy: she is, in fact, but a faithful ally. You observed the vast numbers that flocked to the palace of *Pleasure*: it is always thus that she succeeds in leading off a large majority. And although comparatively few ever make their escape from her halls, yet, for that few, I am almost entirely indebted to the address of *Affliction*. Of all the messengers I despatch with invitations to my abode, none are so successful as she. You would be surprised to hear how many of the inhabitants of this place have been first driven by her from the palace of *Pleasure*, and then led by *Devotion* to our quiet valley."

The last suit of rooms I visited, was on the upper story; and they presented a very interesting and busy scene. A benignant personage, called *Benevolence*, presided here. The moment we ascended, I observed that a fresh glow overspread the face of *Happiness*, and her eyes beamed with more than their wonted effulgence. She met *Benevolence* with a cordial salutation, though it was but a hasty one; for he declared he had so much business on his hands, that he could not stay even to talk with *Happiness*. We followed him, however, through several different rooms, where there was much to gratify my curiosity. In one of these, I saw two or three solitary individuals, hard at work in breaking the chains, and unloosing the

fetters, from thousands of black men; and warding from their bleeding backs the strokes of the lash, which a whole band of gentleman-ruffians were attempting to inflict. In another room, there was a small circle of females, surrounded with a crowd of widows and orphans, to whom they distributed coats and garments. In one long apartment I saw thousands of children, of all colors and countries, receiving instruction. And while some were engaged in their tuition, others were running to and fro along the gallery, and up and down the staircase, with piles of Bibles under their arms, which they distributed to every creature that passed. "Here," said I, "I should presume no evil powers dare intrude." At that, *Benevolence* shook his head: "In time," said he, "we hope to expel them entirely; but I assure you, that if I do but fall asleep for a few minutes, there are two officious beings, called *Ostentation* and *Party-spirit*, who have the impudence to wear my dress; however," said he, "it must be confessed, that these impertinent fellows work very hard, and do a great deal of business for me, so that I should sometimes scarcely know how to get on without them; and till I have more of my own family grown up, I am obliged to wink at their intrusion: sometimes, indeed, I am quite ashamed to see how much more they can accomplish than I do myself."

I had now visited all the great divisions of the building; and *Happiness* said it would be endless.

to conduct me through every secret passage, and into every retired closet, to which no one had access but herself. When she ceased to speak, I gazed at her and sighed: "Alas!" said I, "and is it so, that even *your* sanctuary is thus liable to invasion, and that those who come to reside under your protection, cannot insure your presence for an hour: whither then shall I go?" "Forbear these murmurings," said she, "and follow me." I did so; and she led me once more to the temple of *Devotion*. We found the priestess employed in trimming the flame on her altar, which during the light and bustle of day, was, she said, very apt to languish. *Happiness* told her my complaint, and she thus addressed me:—

"Know you not, poor mortal," she said, "that although *Happiness* has been permitted to erect a temporary residence in this valley, it is not her hereditary estate—and that she reigns here only by a limited and precarious right? Her paternal mansion is in a higher region: there her reign will be absolute, and her presence perpetual; and there the inhabitants of the valley will eventually accompany her. From the upper windows of this temple," continued she, "the golden towers of that palace are occasionally visible: when the sky is clear and the air serene, I can always distinguish them. Do but look steadily, for a time, and you also may perceive them." I turned my tearful eyes towards the quarter where *Devotion*

pointed; but a gross vapor, rising from the earth, prevented my discerning a single turret. *Devotion*, however, assured me that they were there; and I believed her.

## X.

### REVELATION XX. 12.

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God."

READER—you will be there! This awful scene which the apostle John saw in prophetic vision, will be realized; and not the most obscure individual that exists shall be then forgotten: for "it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." Is it not a strange thing that they who have once heard this, should ever be indifferent to it?—that days and weeks should pass without a thought being given to *that* day!—that many who hear and read of the judgment to come, have never, perhaps, in their lives, allowed themselves seriously to reflect upon it, and to recollect how deeply and intimately it concerns themselves! If some important event relating to the present life, could be foretold, such as our entering into the possession of a great estate, our going to reside in a foreign country, or that some great misfortune would befall us; if we could

know beyond a doubt that some such thing would happen, would it not become the subject of our continual thought—the first idea that occurred when we awoke in the morning, the last before we fell asleep at night? And although we might frequently be diverted from it by the necessary engagements of life, still, there would remain a consciousness of it upon our minds, and at every leisure moment it would be the constantly returning recollection.

But it is not necessary to suppose an impossible case. Are we not conscious that affairs of far inferior importance to any that have been mentioned—some expected pleasure that perhaps is to last but a day, has engrossed, for the time, all our thoughts and attention? and this, although every thing connected with our worldly affairs is attended with so much uncertainty, that we cannot be sure that the pleasure we plan for to-morrow will ever be realized; or, that to-morrow may not deprive us of the enjoyment we possess to-day. Now the great event to which we have alluded, has none of these uncertainties to lessen its importance:—"it will surely come:" and every one of us must be awakened by that tremendous blast, when "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised;" the reader and the writer will hear it.

There is no possible way in which this subject can be regarded, but shows it to be one of the

deepest interest. Should we think it a matter of delightful anticipation if we were expecting to visit some of the natural curiosities of our globe, such as the falls of Niagara, or the great volcanoes of Ætna and Vesuvius? Then there is a greater sight than these that we shall certainly behold; "for the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." Why do not our thoughts more frequently dwell upon such an expectation as this?

We should perhaps consider it a remarkable occurrence in our lives if we were to be introduced to some of the princes of this world, especially if it were in order to transact some important concern with them ourselves: this will probably never happen to any of us: but a time approaches when we must stand before a greater than Solomon, "and every eye shall behold him."—

It would be dreadful to witness one of those awful convulsions of nature by which whole cities have been overthrown and plunged in sudden destruction. But that will surely be a more terrible sight, to escape which many will wish even for such a calamity; "calling to the rocks and to the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb." Thus, if this "great day of the Lord" were only to be considered as an object of curiosity, of philosophic interest, it might reas-

onably engross every leisure moment of reflection; for not all the pageants that ever glittered on this earth, not all the most ingenious contrivances of art, nor even the grand phenomena of nature, could pretend to the slightest comparison with the splendors and terrors of that spectacle. But so great is our individual interest in its transactions, that these considerations sink in comparison to insignificance. Yes, for our state for eternity—that word of unfathomable meaning, will then be decided. O, for language to express! O, for hearts enlarged to comprehend its import!

Are these things wonderful? Yet there is a thing still more astonishing; even—that many who know of this great transaction, and are assured of their own personal concern in it, should be indifferent about it; should be able to hear, and to read of it without emotion, without recollection, without examination, without fear;—and this, although they are conscious of being at present quite unprepared for the trial! There is many a timid creature who fears where no fear is—trembling at the slightest accident, and shrinking from the most distant apprehension of danger, who can yet brave the thought of the judgment-day:—can read those passages of Scripture where it is described, with carelessness; can feel at ease, and enter with avidity into the affairs of the world, without sparing a thought—one *serious*

thought upon the subject! this is misplaced courage indeed!—This is hardihood that surpasses all expression! To such conduct the Bible gives the proper name: there it is called *folly;* and most appropriately. They are fools who neglect their own interest; and a wise man is he who pays the greatest attention to the greatest things. In worldly affairs this is readily admitted. Yet the man who should neglect his business to play with the toys of his infancy, would act rationally compared with him "who lays up treasure for himself in this world, but is not rich toward God." If the heart of man were not hard, blind, and deceitful above all things, such folly could not be. Perhaps one of the chief delusions whereby persons suffer themselves to put away the serious consideration of a judgment to come is, that it is so *distant* an event. Ages upon ages must roll away, perhaps, before we shall be roused from our long slumber. But it is only the narrow and limited extent of our present views that can give such a consideration any weight. He who "sees the end from the beginning, and to whom a thousand years are as one day," knows that the importance of that event is not at all lessened by its imagined distance:—awful descriptions of it are accordingly given, in order to arouse us to prepare for it. Abel, for whom the first grave was opened, has had indeed, in our view of things, a long, long repose there: but is it therefore of less conse-

quence to him that he was "righteous," and that God had respect to his offering? Will he have less occasion to rejoice, when he stands on the right hand of the Judge, than the saint who has lived in these last times?

It might also be suggested to those who would cry peace to themselves on account of the supposed distance of judgment, that they who are best skilled in interpreting the prophecies of Scripture, are generally of opinion that "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh;" and that we of this generation will have but a short rest in the grave. Perhaps before the stone that guards our dust shall have mouldered,—before the letters that record our names are quite effaced, it shall be torn up "by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God."

But how near or how distant the time may be is of little consequence, seeing it is *certain*. This it is that gives it its importance. How slight an alleviation is it to the agonies of a condemned criminal to obtain a reprieve, if he knows that it is *only* a reprieve! and in this view we may justly regard the interval, whether long or short, between death and judgment. "The vision is for an appointed time;" and although "of that day and hour knoweth no man, not even the angels of God," yet it is unchangeably fixed: though it seem to tarry, yet we may wait for it with certain expectation, for at that appointed time it will

surely come: it will tarry no longer! Nor let any one imagine that amid such an innumerable assembly, he may possibly be overlooked. It is said that "every one of us must give an account of himself to God, and that the dead, small as well as great, stood before Him." There is, therefore, no person, so young, so obscure, so humble in station or in intellect, but shall stand alone at the bar of that tribunal. So that if you, reader, were to be the only individual singled out for judgment before an assembled universe, your case would not be at all more important or tremendous than it is. But there is another obvious consideration which silences every excuse for indifference, namely, that if judgment be far off, death is near: there may be but a step between us and it; and death will decide our state as certainly as judgment. "There is no repentance in the grave;"—"he that is then unholy must be unholy still."

The unconcern that so many exhibit on this vast subject, can only be accounted for by attributing it to want of *thought*. It is impossible really to *reflect*, and remain indifferent. The remedy, therefore, for such strange and fatal apathy obviously is, to *acquire such habits of reflection* as to familiarize the mind with the concerns of another life. We should then be able to see, by the strong light of Eternity, that things of the greatest importance which only concern this life

—its most interesting and endearing engagements, are less than nothing in comparison with our soul's welfare. And this would inevitably bring us to make that inquiry with earnestness, which at present perhaps is only made with carelessness, "What shall we do to be saved?" "What shall we do to inherit eternal life?"—It is to bring us to this that those grand representations are made in the Scriptures; that by such terrors men may be persuaded—persuaded to flee for refuge "to lay hold on the hope set before them." What that hope is, we all know:—"Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" That terrible expression, "the *wrath* of the Lamb" belongs to Him only as the judge of those who finally refuse to behold Him in this gracious character.

As for those who have a good hope of "going forth with joy to meet their Lord, with their loins girt, and their lamps burning," what an interesting subject of contemplation is this! Let not the trifles of the world ever obscure it. Let not present pleasures, or present sorrows, greatly affect them, seeing they "endure but for a moment." When we look around on this beautiful world, with all its interests and enchantments, let us recollect, that "all these things shall be dissolved"—not forgetting the inference of the apostle, "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!"

## XI.

ECCLESIASTES XI. 8.

"If a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many."

"TRULY the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" and perhaps the truth of the remark is never felt more forcibly than on a New Year's morning. Not the brilliancy of a summer's sun can excite a more cheerful feeling than his aspect on a fine winter's day, especially at that season when festive pleasures and holyday feelings impart imaginary charms to every object. With the New Year we seem to begin life anew; and forgetting that we are, in fact, advanced so much further on our course, we are apt to imagine that a period is added rather than lost to us. The pains, the fears, the mistakes, the follies of the past are forgotten; at least we hope now to escape or avoid them, because it is a *New Year*. Thus, it is hope rather than sunshine, that inspires us with cheerfulness, while dismissing the painful remembrance of past disappointments, we anticipate the unknown advantages and pleasures of the untried future. It is right and wise to rejoice, with a thankful and cheerful heart, in the circumstances

of comfort which surround us; especially let us acknowledge the goodness of our heavenly Father, in sparing us to behold the cheerful beams of another New Year's sun. In this temper, it is truly "a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold it."

There is, however, a peculiar suitableness, at this season, in the admonitory words of our motto; namely, to "remember the days of darkness." The preacher here, for argument's sake, supposes a very improbable case; that is, that a man who lives many years, may rejoice in them all. None knew better than king Solomon himself that such a thing never happens; for he, who possessed every thing in this world in which a man may rejoice, declared that "all was vanity and vexation of spirit." But, though well aware of this, he chooses to admit the possibility of such a circumstance, in order to meet every objection. He considered, perhaps, that the young, to whom he addressed himself, would not think it so unlikely as he did. "Suppose then," he says, "that a man should have a long life of uninterrupted happiness, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they are many;" and this is the reason why it is so very important to remember them.

By "the days of darkness" we are to understand the state of the dead. But when Solomon wrote this passage, perhaps he himself did not apprehend how long a period, how "many days,"

he should spend in the region of darkness. What a succession of ages have rolled away since he first "slept with his fathers, and was buried in the sepulchre of the kings!" Once he rejoiced in the light, and thought it a pleasant thing to behold the sun: but how many suns have risen and set behind "the mountains that are round about Jerusalem," since the days of darkness came upon him! How wise, then, was he to remember those days, to realize their coming, and to anticipate their long duration!

The young sometimes plead the length of life as an excuse for putting off these recollections. But how much wiser it would be to consider rather the length of that "night, in which no man can work!" We need not go so far back as the days of Solomon, in order to be convinced of this. Let our thoughts only recur to a comparatively recent time, the beginning of the last century, for instance: the literature of the day makes us well acquainted with the period. We are quite familiar with that generation: their thoughts, their feelings, manners and habits, their hopes and fears, were much like our own. We can easily realize a family party assembled around the blazing fire of our great-grandsires, on the New Year's morning of one thousand seven hundred and eighteen. By the aid of a little imagination, we can substitute the huge carved mantel-piece, adorned with grotesque figures and rich China jars, for our light classic

marble, and tasty chimney ornaments; and then we may fancy their cheerful looks, and friendly salutations, as the compliments of the season were interchanged. The young faces *then*, like the young faces *now*, beaming with hope and joy, and looking forward to a long series of new and happy years: and yet it is of these once gay and youthful beings that we must now say, "our fathers where are they?" They looked forward to distant times, but did they look quite far enough? They thought, perhaps, of ten, twenty, or fifty years to come; but did their thoughts extend to a hundred?—Did they think of the year 1818, when all to them would be over; when all they hoped, feared, and enjoyed, would be forgotten?—did they remember "the days of darkness?"—It is of no importance to *us* to answer this question: probably it was then, as it is now, the *few* did, and the *many* did *not* "so number their days as to apply their hearts to wisdom."

But let us turn from the past to the present; and ask, do *we* so number them? The next age, and new generations, will as certainly come to sweep us and ours away, and to occupy our stations, as we have taken possession of those of our forefathers. The social circles who assemble on the New Year's morning of 1918, will not probably even pay us the compliment of recollecting that we ever existed: or should such a thought arise, it will be, perhaps, only to laugh at our old

fashions and antiquated customs; or to congratulate themselves upon living in a more advanced and happy state of society. Some few, it may be, will moralize upon the past age; reflect how that generation has passed away, and charitably hope that they were wise enough, while they saw the light, "to remember the days of darkness."

But is this wisdom ours? Do we realize those days? Do we frequently call off our thoughts from the objects which surround us, and summon them to these solemn recollections? A new year reminds us of the quick passage of life. It is now truly seasonable to consider our latter end. We have all been recently reminded, in the most affecting manner, how soon "the flower may fade." Every youth in Britain has been solemnly, and, as it were, personally addressed by the awful voice of this providence. What young heart had not sympathized with England's fair Princess, in her distinguished lot and splendid prospects? How many of our readers have formerly amused themselves with imagining, if *they* were in her place, what *they* should feel, and what *they* would do?—And now, it appears, that if they had been, the wisest and best thing that they could have thought or done, would have been to "remember the days of darkness!" Let those whose imaginations have often visited her in her spacious palace, now pursue her to the dark and lonesome sepulchre; not one ray of "sweet light," nor of that

"pleasant sun," which still shines on her deserted mansion, can penetrate to those gloomy vaults. The "days of darkness" are come upon her.

But to what purpose should we indulge these contemplations? not as an idle speculation; not for the sake of melancholy brooding; not to compare our own situation with her's, and to congratulate ourselves that we are not now as she is: but on the contrary, to recollect our own mortality, and to reflect that, although we could not partake the honors of her former station, we shall assuredly share the darkness of her present abode; not indeed in a spacious mausoleum, but in some humble grave.

> "Well, if our days must fly,
> We 'll keep their end in sight,
> We'll spend them all in wisdom's way,
> And let them speed their flight."

This is the moral of the whole: and how cheering is the thought to which it leads! If we are Christians, light dawns upon the darkness of death itself, and penetrates even to the tomb. Then we may say, "O grave, where is thy victory!" and, in this cheerful song, the prince and the peasant may unite.

While we remember, then, the days of darkness, let it be in order to lead our thoughts, our desires, our endeavors, our *ambition*, towards a land of light and glory. "The night cometh, but

also the morning." The night of death is dark, but the morning of the resurrection will break with inconceivable brightness, and how pleasant will it be to our eyes to behold *that* light! The days of darkness will be passed forever when "the new heavens and the new earth" appear. "There will be no night there;" and "there will be no need of the sun, neither of the moon, for the glory of God and of the Lamb will be the light thereof."

## XII.

### PSALM XXVII. 4.

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after."

THIS language might be adopted, in part, with great sincerity by persons of every age, station, and character. It is by no means peculiar to the devout writer, nor to pious men to desire one thing above all others, and to seek after it with energy and diligence. Even the endless variety of trifling pursuits and vain desires which occupy the youthful mind may generally be comprehended under some one object, towards the attainment of which they are all directed.

The "*one thing*" desired by some, and which in a thousand different ways they determine to seek

after, is *admiration*. It is in pursuit of this object that many devote their hours and their energies to dress. Others, for the same purpose, to the acquirement of various accomplishments: and some, with no higher aim, will even be at the pains of storing their minds with useful knowledge. Others, again, will engage in the active offices of charity and benevolence; and (worst of all) are there not some who will even make a fair show of religion itself, with no better object in view, than this "one thing," to obtain the applause and admiration of their fellow creatures?

There are many of a different temper of mind, who, amid a thousand changing pursuits and varying wishes, yet may be said to desire that "one thing," *pleasure:* and this according to their ages, tastes and opportunities, they eagerly seek after; in toys, in sports, in idleness, in feasting, in company: whatever be the particular means, still the grand aim, the "one thing" desired, is to please, and to enjoy themselves; "that will *they* seek after."

There is a very large proportion of mankind with whom the "one thing" desired is *riches*. For this they rise early, and sit up late; and there are none who can more emphatically employ the language of our text; none who more industriously and ardently seek after their object.

But there are some among the young as well as those of maturer age whose "*one thing*" is of a higher order than any of these;—some in whom

natural taste, united with the advantages of education, has inspired a true love of knowledge; who thirst for mental improvement: their state of feeling is expressively described by Solomon, who had himself fully experienced it—"Through desire, a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom." How feelingly and ardently do such exclaim, "One thing have I desired, that will I seek after!"

Under these general heads it would be easy to enter into particulars; but this may be more profitably referred to the experience of the reader. Let each one inquire, what is the *one* important thing to which, at the present moment, all his thoughts and activity are directed. If it should happen to be something so trifling, so useless, so unworthy, or so silly, that they would be ashamed to specify it, yet let them not hesitate to detect and confess it to themselves; it might be useful to pause for an instant, and say, "So then, among all the important objects of pursuit which may engage the attention of an intelligent being, *this* is the 'one thing' which I have desired, and after which I am resolved, above all others, to seek." Every one indeed, who has observed, with any accuracy, the workings of his own mind, must be aware what intenseness of desire, what eagerness of pursuit are frequently devoted to things so essentially trifling that they weary or disgust as soon as they are possessed.

But now, with regard to all the *desires* and *seekers* that have been alluded to, whether their attention be directed to vain and trifling, or to lawful and rational objects of pursuit, yet if their aims rise no higher, how suitable is that remark once made to as amiable and hopeful a young person as any who will peruse this page; "*One thing* thou lackest."

Let us then, first inquire, what is that "one thing" which David in the text desires of the Lord; and, secondly, consider the means he employed for the fulfilment of this desire. Now, the remainder of the verse fully explains that the grand object of the holy Psalmist's ambition was no other than the "one thing needful."—"One thing have I desired of the Lord," he says, "that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." That is, he wishes above all things, to be a servant of God, and to live a life of holy obedience, and of communion with him. What an unspeakable difference between this desire and all others, however lawful or reasonable! Earthly hopes, the very best of them, are liable to disappointment, are founded on uncertainty, and frequently terminate in mortification and disgust. But this one, if sincere, will not only be certainly fulfilled, but when attained, will fully satisfy, and even surpass expectation; besides that it includes

in it all that is really good in our earthly wishes. Let us examine it more particularly.

"*That I may dwell in the house of the Lord;*"—that is, he hoped to be continually favored with the outward means of grace; those means which we are so apt to undervalue. It was no weariness to David to go up to the house of the Lord, but his delight. How much more profitable would the services of religion be if this feeling were more general! if we were to attend them expecting and desiring spiritual blessings! And observe, David desired to dwell there "all the days of his life," not only in his declining days, when he should have done with the affairs of the world; but during his years of health and vigor: and when, if he had wanted to make excuse, he had the splendors of the court and the business of the state to dissipate his thoughts, and occupy his time. Happy they who thus desire to be early "planted in the house of the Lord;" for such only are likely to "*flourish* in the courts of their God." Nor should any expect to bring forth much fruit in old age, but those who, like David, desire to dwell there all their days.

But his object was "to behold the beauty of the Lord:" this indeed is the sum of true religion; for when once the eyes of the mind are spiritually enlightened to perceive His infinite excellence, the desires will be no longer going after earthly good. It is only from blindness that we love

creatures more than God. It was in consequence of thus beholding His beauty that David not only could say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee!" but was able to add, what is far more difficult, "there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." It is the most lamentable consequence of our depraved nature to hide God and his perfections from our view. And although we behold so much of his glory in the works of his hands—for "all his works praise him," and so much of his bounty and goodness in the conduct of his providence—for "he openeth his hand and satisfieth the desires of every living thing," yet we see him not, we know him not, our hearts are at enmity with him, and we perceive "no beauty in him that we should desire him," till he "lift up the light of his countenance upon us: then we behold the beauty of the Lord."

And having once had a glimpse of His excellence, it will be our chief business and pleasure "to inquire in His temple;" to wait at the posts of His doors: to learn His will, to do His commandments, and to be taught the whole of His truth. The more we know of God, the more we shall desire to know.

But secondly; what means did David employ for the attainment of that "one thing" which he desired? First, he desired it "*of the Lord;*" secondly, he determined to "*seek after it;*" that is, he *prayed* and he *endeavored.* These means united

ensured his success. How many fail and come short in religion from neglecting one, or the other, or both! Desires after some acquaintance with God, and for a religious life, are very common. Few indeed, if any, who have had religious instruction, but have known some wishes of this nature. And why is it that they so frequently become fainter and fainter till at last they disappear amid the cares and pleasures of this life, but because they were not accompanied by *prayer*, and *endeavor; fervent* prayer and *persevering* endeavor? This only can be the reason; for the promise is explicit and unqualified, "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find;"—"He is the rewarder of them that *diligently* seek him." Therefore it is most certain, that if any remain ignorant of God; unconscious of their need; and unacquainted with Jesus and the way of salvation; or if they are cold and lifeless in religion, it is because they have not made known their desires to the Lord, nor effectively determined to seek after him.

This subject affords encouragement to those who are conscious of lively desires and sincere determinations of devoting themselves to the service of God. If, after counting the cost, and looking round upon the pleasures and attractions of the world, any one can humbly say, in the meaning of the text, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after," let them not fear but

he will give them "the desires of their hearts." As to such as have no other than languid, indolent, eneffective disires after religion, (and this, it is to be feared is the case with a large proportion of young people in the religious world,) let them be stimulated by this subject to earnestness and activity: remembering that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;" and to encourage the most backward, it is added, "to them that have *no might* he increaseth strength." But if another should say, "Alas; I have no desires towards religion," let such go and entreat the Lord to awaken good desires in their cold, worldly hearts; and they shall "not be sent empty away."

## XIII.

### THE WISE MAN.

Frederic and Philip, with their sisters Julia and Kate, were amusing themselves together one evening while their father and mother were engaged in conversation. The children paid no attention to what passed, till Philip (who was very lively and inquisitive) happened to hear his father say of some person he was speaking of, that he might be truly called, *a wise man!* These last

words, which were uttered emphatically, struck his attention.

"A wise man!" said he to his brother and sisters: "who is that, I wonder, that papa can be talking about?"—"Nobody that we know, you may be sure," replied Kate.—"No, but papa knows him, and I should like to know him very much," said Philip; and he began to conjecture what kind of a person this wise man must be. He thought of the seven wise men of Greece; but he did not imagine there were any of that sort in England. As soon as there was a pause in the conversation, he asked his papa what this wise man's name was, and where he lived. "He lives," replied his father, "not very far off; and his name is Johnson."

"Johnson! O, some relation to Dr. Johnson, no doubt," said Frederic.—"That is more than I know," answered his father; "but if you are so curious to see a wise man, I will promise to take you all to call upon him to-morrow morning."

Philip and the rest thanked their papa for this promise; and very much pleased were they at the thought of it.

The next morning the children talked much of their expected visit; and wondered they did not hear their father give orders for the chaise.

"How many miles off is it, papa?" said Philip.

"Not half a mile," said his father.

PHILIP. Not half a mile! Well, now, I had no idea that there was, what one could call *a wise man* living any where hereabouts.

FREDERIC. No more had I.

JULIA. I think I know where he lives:—don't you remember that oldfashioned looking house, just off the common, with tall narrow windows, and a high wall all around it, where they say a very old gentleman lives all alone?—that is the place, I dare say.

PHILIP. I wonder whether he wears a long beard!

KATE. No, no; most likely nothing but a huge wig.

JULIA. A wig! no such thing! depend upon it he has his own white locks, waving about his temples.

PHILIP. We shall find him up to his elbows in old dusty books, I 'll engage.

FREDERIC. Or perhaps with globes and glasses, and all sorts of apparatus.

PHILIP. He will not be very well pleased, I am afraid, to be interrupted in his studies by us.

JULIA. For my part, I shall take care not to speak one word while we are in the room.

KATE. And so shall I.

PHILIP. I hope he will not ask us any questions!

FREDERIC. O, as to that, you may depend upon it he will not notice one of us; perhaps not so much as know we are there.

KATE. I am afraid I shall laugh.

PHILIP. Laugh! if you do though, we shall get turned out, every one of us, depend upon it.

On these remarks their papa made no comment; he only smiled occasionally, and at length bade them make ready to accompany him on his visit to the wise man. When they set off, Julia was much surprised that he passed the turning leading to the common, and kept straight on towards the town. "*Now* I have no idea who in the world it can be," said she. When they entered the town, they looked at most of the principal houses as they passed, expecting to stop every instant. "*Doctor Somebody;*" said Philip, endeavoring to read the name on a brass plate—"this is it, I dare say." But no; his father passed on, and soon turned down a narrow street, where the dwellings were of a humbler description; and knocked at the door of a mean looking house. A plain, middle-aged man opened it, and courteously invited them to enter. "Papa has to call here first, for something," whispered the children to each other. He ushered them into a small parlor, where his wife was sitting at needle-work; while three girls, her daughters, were seated on a form before her, reading their lessons. The room was in perfect order; and the mother and her children were neatly dressed. The only decorations of the apartment were two or three maps; and a few portraits of some of the old divines, and other pious ministers, on the wall.

The young folks listened to the conversation which their father entered into with these persons; and they quickly perceived (for these children were well taught, and could discriminate) that they conversed sensibly; and that their father, although much their superior in education, regarded them with respect. After a few minutes thus spent, their papa told the master of the house that he would not detain him any longer from his employment; but that he had taken the liberty of bringing his children with him, in the hope that he would allow them to look on for a little time, while he was at work: it would be, he said, both amusing and instructive to them, as they had never had an opportunity of seeing that operation before. To this request he most obligingly acceded; and, with a look of great good nature at the young folks, immediately conducted them to the uppermost room in the house, in which he carried on his business. It was a light, airy apartment; and there was a pleasant view of the adjacent country from its long low window. The children were much interested in watching the process, and in listening to the intelligent explanation he gave them of his trade; for he was a very ingenious mechanic; and he told them many things which they had never heard before.

When their curiosity was a little satisfied, they began to look around the room, where their attention was attracted to a few shelves, containing his

small library. Upon examining the titles of the books, they found that several of them treated of subjects more or less connected with his own line of business. There were, however, a few of a more general nature, and such as the children were surprised to see in the possession of so plain a man. But the greater part of the collection were well-chosen books of divinity; with a Bible, which had the appearance of being well read. They now again listened to the stranger's discourse with their father; and were struck with the mild and pleasing expression of his countenance, when he was telling him how happily his hours passed in that solitary chamber.

"I often think, sir," said he, "that I cannot be sufficiently thankful that my calling is of a nature that allows me so much retirement and opportunity for thinking: so that while I am laboring for the meat that perishes, I am also able to seek after that which will endure to everlasting life. Indeed, sir," continued he, "I am a happy man. The cheerful hope of another life is surely enough to make a man unspeakably happy. In addition to this, God is pleased to give me many comforts to render this life pleasant to me. I have a wife like-minded with myself; and when my working hours are over, I want no other recreation than that of going down to her and our dear children, whom it is our delight to train up, as far as we are able, to wisdom and virtue. I

have great pleasure in reading to her and to them such books as we possess; and thus we increase our little stock of knowledge, as opportunity allows. But, sir, though I mention these things, my happiness, I trust, does not depend upon them; but is fixed upon that good hope which sweetens every comfort, and softens every trial."

The father and his children were pleased with their visit; which, for sometime after they took leave, formed the subject of their conversation; until Philip, suddenly perceiving that they were on their return home, exclaimed, "But are not we going to see the wise man?"—"My dear," said his father, "we have but just left him."—"What, was *that* the wise man?" said all the children at once.

FATHER. That was the person of whom you heard me say last night, that he was a truly wise man.

PHILIP. But, papa—I thought—

FATHER. Well, what did you think?

PHILIP. Why although he appears very good, and happy, and industrious, and all that, yet he certainly is not at all the kind of person we expected to see.

FREDERIC. No, not at all.

FATHER. I cannot help that: and I still think that what I said of him was perfectly correct. What kind of a person did you expect to see?

PHILIP. Why, papa, we thought he would at

least be a scholar, you know, with his head stuffed full of Latin and Greek; or a philosopher, or an author, or something of that sort.

FATHER. You mean, that you expected to see a learned man, or a clever man: but that was your own fault: I promised you no such thing. Are you not aware, children, that a man may be learned, or clever, or both, without being *wise;* and that a man may be *wise* who is neither the one nor the other?

FREDERIC. Yes, wise in some things.

FATHER. Wise in every thing with which *he* has to do.—Can you recollect, Frederic, that definition of wisdom we met with the other day?

FREDERIC. Something of this sort, was it not?—that "*wisdom consists in employing the best means for the attainment of the most important end.*"

FATHER. Very well. Then I think we have unquestionably seen a wise man this morning. You heard from himself the grand object of this good man's pursuit; and this must by every one be allowed to be the most important of all objects. He aims at nothing less than eternal life; and to this end, he appears to employ the best means; such as God himself prescribes. And this wisdom, which is from above, teaches him to conduct himself wisely in all the relations of life. He is wise as a tradesman;—being honest and industrious; and exerting his ingenuity in his calling, as a talent which God has given him; so that he is one

of the most ingenious mechanics in the neighborhood. He is wise as a neighbor—living in peace and charity with all around him. He is wise as the master of a family—being contented with such things as he has: never attempting to vie with his superiors, nor aiming to be thought what he is not. He showed himself to be a wise man, by choosing for a partner a wise woman: that is, a pious and prudent woman: and he conducts himself wisely as a husband and a father—guiding his house with discretion, and training his children to tread in his *own* steps. He eminently displays also one of the invariable characteristics of true wisdom, by his modest and unassuming deportment. But above all, and as the cause of all, this man is wise, in making it his chief concern to be a Christian: not merely by profession, but in earnest. His *religion*, you see, is of the true sort. It not only *gives* him a hope of being happy hereafter, but it *makes* him happy *now*. It shines in his face, and *reigns* in his dwelling. In that solitary room where many would think it a punishment to pass an hour, he *enjoys*, daily, the high honor and happiness of holding communion with his Maker; while the *noisy* world below are disquieting themselves in vain, with every passing vanity. And in his daily walk and conversation, he has this testimony, that he pleases God.

Now, children, have I not performed my promise?—tell me, if you have not seen, according to the strictest sense of the word, A WISE MAN?

## XIV.

### THE CLEVER FOOL.

Not very long after the father and his children had paid their visit to the wise man, the effects of a gentleman lately deceased in that neighborhood, were advertised for sale by auction. As it was well known that his house contained many curiosities, persons from miles round, flocked to attend the sale: and, amongst the rest, this gentleman and his children; for he was so good a father that he suffered no opportunity to escape that might afford instruction or rational amusement to his family.

"Children," said he to them, as they were driving to the place—"you remember that sometime ago I took you to see a wise man; you were surprised by that visit; perhaps you will be still more so when I tell you, that we are going this morning to the late residence of a man, who, according to all that appeared of his character, might with equal propriety have been called *a clever fool.*"

Philip. A clever fool!

Julia. It seems a contradiction.

Frederic. Papa will explain it, I dare say.

Kate. A clever fool!—how droll!

Father. As this poor gentleman was a stran-

ger to you, and as our opinions can now do him neither good nor harm, I do not scruple, with a view of its being useful to ourselves, to relate to you what appeared unfavorable in his character. But let us, at the same time, indulge a charitable hope, that we may, after all, be mistaken in our judgment. Indeed I could wish, as much as possible, to keep him, as an individual, out of sight. I only mean to explain to you, that a person living and acting, as it is commonly reported he did, can claim no higher appellation than that of a *clever fool.*

CHILDREN. Well papa, now tell us how it was.

FATHER. Nay, stay till we arrive at his house, and have looked about us, and then you shall judge for yourselves.

Upon their arrival at the destined spot, they were charmed with the beauty of the situation, and the pleasant aspect of the residence. The house and grounds were rather compact and elegant, than extensive or magnificent: but there was a symmetry and beauty of design which at once pleased the eye, and conveyed an idea of the good taste of the possessor. And as the general view was striking, the detail, when examined, excited still greater admiration. Our party, at first, amused themselves with walking through the park and gardens, which exhibited, at every turn, some ingenious contrivance for pleasure or utility. The gardens displayed a variety of the most beautiful

flowers, in the greatest perfection. The greenhouses were, of themselves, thought worth going many miles to see, they contained so rare a collection of exotics, and other curious plants, disposed in the most exact order; while fruits in and out of season, yielded their tempting fragrance in rich profusion. Stately swans adorned the river that wound through the park; while shady alcoves, rosy bowers, classic temples, baths and fountains, at every turn surprised the admiring visiter. The recesses of a shady grove, conducted to a cool and beautiful grotto, which was enriched with some of the most rare and curious specimens in mineralogy. Lastly, they visited a small botanical garden, which afforded them much instruction as well as amusement; for the late possessor was a man of science, and took particular pains with this well arranged collection.

The children were delighted; and not less surprised when they were assured that of these various embellishments and contrivances he was himself the designer and inventor: and that it was his own taste and ingenuity that was displayed in every part.

Upon entering the mansion, the effect was not less striking. The apartments were disposed and furnished with great taste and elegance; and continually exhibited some novel invention for promoting ease or pleasure, or for avoiding inconvenience. But, what was the most interesting, were

the valuable collections in the various departments of art and science with which this house was embellished. A capital collection of old pictures, by the best masters, occupied the long gallery. The library was extensive, and contained a well arranged assemblage of the works of the most celebrated authors of every age, and in every language.

They were next shown a cabinet, containing a valuable assortment of ancient coins and medals: after which they visited the laboratory: for it appeared that the deceased possessed a thorough knowledge of chemistry; and had himself made some ingenious discoveries in that interesting science. Another room was devoted to mechanism; and exhibited models of many of the most useful and ingenious machines of modern invention, some of them displaying improvements of his own. Last of all, ascending to the highest story, they reached the observatory, which was furnished with its appropriate apparatus, and contained the largest telescope these children had ever seen. The gentleman, it was said, frequently passed whole nights in this place; astronomy was his favorite study.—For all these things were not collected by him (as is frequently the case in the houses of the rich) as mere appendages to wealth. The curiosities of science, art, and literature, are commonly enough to be seen in the possession of persons of trifling and vulgar minds, wholly

incapable of deriving any other gratification from them than as articles of show, and who value them merely as they do the other expensive ornaments of their dwellings. But, in this instance, they were possessed by a man of taste and science; who derived genuine pleasure from the pursuits in which he was engaged; and who was therefore, so far, happy, useful, and respectable. When the party descended to the lower part of the house, they found it filled with company, and the great hall exhibited a scene of noise, bustle, and confusion. The auctioneer was, at that moment, expatiating on the value of an article before him, which some were cautiously examining: others were marking their catalogues; each was intent on his own interests, and nothing was less thought of than he to whom all had so lately belonged.

"Let us leave this noisy place, papa," said Julia,—"it makes me melancholy."—They soon made their way through the crowd; and leaving the mansion, their father lead them through a fine plantation to the outskirts of the park, where they soon discovered a little ivy-clad steeple, embowered in dark chestnut trees, surrounded by a few lowly graves, and adorned with one or two stately monuments. "Here," said the father, pointing to one of these—"lie the remains of this accomplished person."

"Now then, papa," said Philip—"pray tell us, though I partly guess, why you called such a

clever man—a fool," "Because," replied his father—"of his whole existence, which he knew would be endless, he apparently provided for no more than the exceedingly small proportion of sixty-eight years. It is true that to make these sixty-eight years pass pleasantly, he spared no pains; and we will allow, that he so far succeeded, as to enjoy, during that time, more rational pleasure than most men who live only for this world. But, granting this, is it not still the lowest degree of folly for a man to devote all the energies of his mind to securing the comfort and entertainment of so short a period, and to make no provision for an eternal existence?—There he lies! all that he ever appeared to care for he has lost forever Those curious collections which he made with so much pains and cost—all those fruits of his patient and laborious studies, which we have been admiring, will, in a few hours, be disposed of and dispersed; the cheerful mansion will be empty and deserted: other inhabitants will occupy it: in a few years his name will be no more remembered! so that the only thing that was of any real consequence to him, is that which, it is greatly to be feared, he totally neglected.

"But the extremity of his folly was this:—that this change which he has undergone, this loss of all that he valued, was what he was well aware must, somewhere about this time, befall him. He knew, as well as all other men, that he must die.

He knew, too, that the great Creator, whose works he spent his life in investigating and admiring, had, by an express revelation, informed him, in common with others, of the only way of securing everlasting life and happiness. Of these things he could not be ignorant: nor did I ever understand that he professed to doubt them: yet, strange to say, that divine volume stood unopened on his shelves. It is said this unhappy man rarely read the Bible!—That he, who could spend whole nights in gazing on the heavens, bent not his knee to the Former of them all. That while so plenteously partaking the bounties of His providence, he never (unless with the utmost formality) acknowledged his obligation; or appeared to feel his dependence. Even of late, when he knew he must be drawing towards the close of life, he appeared to engage, with as much avidity as ever, in his favorite pursuits: though he loved conversation, and delighted to discourse on other subjects, yet he was never known to talk about the life to come, upon which he was so soon to enter. Thus he deliberately chose to enjoy these few poor years, and to neglect his concerns for immortality. Now, if this clever man had purposely set fire to his beautiful house, and had calmly seen all his valuable collections consumed by the flames, every body would have exclaimed—"What a fool!"—As it was, he was extolled and applauded by most men, although guilty of incomparably greater madness than this.

"Children, endeavor to conceive (though it is impossible you should fully comprehend it) the tremendous folly of neglecting a book which God has sent us to read! It is only because it is so very common for men to disregard their Bibles, that we are not more struck with the strange absurdity of it. This gentleman was particularly admired for the universality of his talents: and, it was always spoken to his praise, that, while so much engaged in scientific pursuits, he attended equally to the elegances and refinements of life; he was as cheerful a companion, and as finished a gentleman, as he was a sound philosopher. But, alas! how very far, it is to be feared, he was from being *universally* sagacious!—how very partial and limited even was his cleverness! He not only knew that in a few years he must die, but, in some ways, he deliberately prepared for the event. He made his will: he gave particular directions as to what should take place after his decease; he even caused this vault to be built, left directions for his funeral, and wrote an inscription for his monument. So that, you see, he left nothing undone but that one thing, which, alone, was of real consequence to him. This poor clever fool had no forethought, made no provision for his soul!

"I have been told, that the last thing that occupied his attention was an improved method of raising pine-apples. By a great deal of thought and ingenuity, he succeeded in raising them some

weeks earlier, and of a finer sort than any that were grown in the neighborhood. Yes, children —here was a man of nearly seventy, really interested about *pine-apples*, while the great business of his eternal welfare was still unattended to! A party of friends was invited to dine with him, in order to partake of this rich dessert; but, on the eve of this intended entertainment, it was said to him,—"This night thy soul shall be required of thee." He was found the next morning dead in his bed; and now, whose are those things that he possessed?

JULIA. Oh, papa!

FATHER. Now, children, let us leave this melancholy spot; remembering that whether or not our fears of this individual are well founded, we are but too well assured that the world abounds with men and women, who, if not as clever, are quite as foolish as we have supposed him to have been. Let it be *our* chief concern that we may not be of the number. But never, never, till that day, when this sepulchre shall be torn open by the voice of the archangel, will any human mind be fully able to comprehend the dreadful difference between a *plain wise man*, and a *clever fool*.

## XV.

REVELATION XIV. 13.

"I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

BUT is it not a dismal thing to die?—to leave this busy and beautiful world—to close the eyes forever on all the engaging objects that surround us—to forsake the pleasing and interesting pursuits of life—to have done forever with its pleasures, to break off from every favorite scheme, and all our agreeable recreations—can all this be otherwise than painful? And still more so is the thought of leaving the endeared circle of our friends; to see those faces no more that are so familiar and so much beloved; no more to make one of the domestic band of which we have long formed an animated part: for our voice to be heard no more in the lively discourse; our smile never again to enliven the social intercourse! and even this is not all: to die is not merely to be absent (as we may frequently have been) at a distant place, from whence we could still hold some intercourse with those we love: but it is to go forever whence we cannot either return to, or maintain any connexion with them. Besides, whither is it to go? Is it not to the cold grave? This body which has been nourished and cherished with so

much care and tenderness, to which so much cost and pains have been devoted to make it comfortable and agreeable; which has been, perhaps, tenderly screened from every blast—this body must lie and perish in the comfortless tomb! This it is to die:—thus death is naturally regarded by us:—no wonder then that it is an event so universally dreaded and so carefully avoided. All ages naturally shrink from death, from the youngest child that is capable of any reflection, to the old man who has arrived at the utmost verge of life. All ranks fear it: the poor, who have so little to attach them to life; as well as the rich, whose treasure lies in this world; the servant and the slave, as much almost as their master,—the savage as well as the civilized. This then is the cry from earth.

Now let us hear the voice from heaven: "Blessed are the dead;"——What a strange difference is this! In what an opposite light do these parties view the same circumstance! Let us inquire which of them is best qualified to judge of it; and whether this view of the subject is likely to be correct.

Observe then, that *this* voice was not that of some pious minister, by whom we may frequently have heard the blessedness of the saints in heaven asserted; nor was it the voice of mourning relatives, consoling themselves with this consideration for the loss of some dear friend. Nor was it the

voice of the Scriptures only, although by them we now hear this truth declared. Nor was it the voice of some lost soul; who from the regions of misery and despair, might lift up his eyes and behold afar off the blessed society of heaven. These voices indeed, would be impressive, and we might justly give credit to any of them. But this voice came with still greater authority than any of these:—it came from *Heaven*. Perhaps it was not even the voice of an angel; but might be spoken by one of those very blessed ones who had died in the Lord. However this might be, it proceeded from some one of the inhabitants of the place where the spirits of the just abide, and who was therefore well qualified to judge of the state in which they exist. While this voice spoke, the light and glory of heaven itself shone upon the speaker. How impossible would it have been to impress that heavenly orator with an idea that there was anything gloomy or lamentable in the death of good men, while on the one hand he looked down upon this dark and sorrowful world, whence they came out of great tribulation; and while on the other he beheld the glories of Paradise, and stood in full view of those heavenly mansions which the Lord has prepared for his saints. Amid that "innumerable company of angels and of the spirits of just men made perfect"—partaking of that fulness of joy, of those rivers of pleasures, which flow through the celes-

tial regions, how must he pity the darkness and unbelief of those who "start and shrink and fear to launch away," into life and happiness.

Thus then, when we consider from whence the voice proceeded, we must needs give the fullest credit to its testimony. If a friend who had emigrated to a foreign country, for which we intended shortly to sail, were to write a very favorable account of it, and to assure us of its pleasantness and fertility, we should not only credit the description, but with increased impatience hasten our departure, and rejoice in the prospect of arriving there. Why then should not this faithful assurance from one who inhabits that heavenly country produce the same effect? Let us *believe* that it is, indeed, a blessed thing to die; that death will not only deliver us from the pains and sufferings of the present life, but that all the accumulated pleasures and advantages of this world are not to be compared with the glory that shall follow.

Let not young persons think this subject inapplicable to them. For, not to mention the uncertainty of life at every age, it is of the highest importance to be early impressed with just ideas of death and futurity: that it may become a subject of familiar and agreeable reflection, rather than of dread and terror. It is common to sigh and say, "we must die:" but this is not the proper language and feeling respecting that great change.

And if we were early accustomed to dwell upon those descriptions of the heavenly world, and those assurances of the blessedness of the saints in light with which the Scriptures abound, it would become an object of actual desire. Instead of thinking of heaven as a mere refuge from hell (which it is to be feared is too commonly the case, even with those who know better) we should, like the apostle, have a *desire* to depart, and to exchange this imperfect state for that unchanging felicity.

It may be thought we have forgotten one important part of our text, from which it might appear that this comfortable information is addressed only to such as are there described.—But no: although it is true, that of all the dead, they only are blessed "who die in the Lord," yet this assurance is made to *all* the living, to allure them to come to the Lord, that they also may partake of this blessedness.—Observe, the voice which the apostle heard from heaven, said unto him, "*Write*;" and surely it was to be written in order that all might read, and be profited, and stimulated by this most interesting intelligence. Those therefore who have reason to fear that they have never yet given themselves to God, instead of passing over such passages as these, as though they had no concern in them, should, on the contrary, read and study them as that which was commanded to be written for *their* special use. As

the poor prodigal was induced to arise and set off homewards, in consequence of reflecting upon the abundant provisions of his father's house; so may sinners, young and old, be allured to set their faces Zion-ward, by contemplating the blessed state of the inhabitants of that heavenly city. And O, how much encouragement have they to do so! The gladness of the news of salvation consists in this—That all this inconceivable felicity is attainable by every one who hears of it. There is no obstacle;—all are invited;—the gay, the worldly, those who are far from righteousness; if they do but "ask, shall receive; if they knock, the door of this happiness will be opened to them." And they know who has said, "I am the door; by me if any man enter, he shall go in and out and find pasture." It is true there is but one way to heaven: but there is no need of any other; because this one way is safe, easy, and open to every passenger. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself proclaims, without any limitation, "Verily, verily, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." This is good news indeed! But if the contemplation of this endless happiness, if the sound of these encouraging invitations should fail to induce any to seek it, let such hear the terrors of the Lord. Let them remember that the dead who die *without* the Lord, are cursed. For, as we see in the context, "they have no rest day nor night, but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever."

Those who have lost some dear friend, of whom there is good reason to believe that they died in the Lord, may hear themselves addressed particularly by the voice of our text. Were they permitted, they would surely corroborate this testimony; and say to their mourning relations—"It *is* true;—the dead that die in the Lord are blessed indeed!" But let us not suppose that a supernatural proof of the reality of that blessedness is necessary to our firmly believing it; nor that such an interposition would, of itself, be sufficient to overcome our reluctance and indisposition to spiritual things: for "if we believe not Moses and the prophets, Jesus and his apostles, if we are not affected by the impressive declarations of the word of God, neither should we be persuaded though one were to address us from the dead."

## XVI.

### THE HOPEFUL ONE.

A GOOD minister having occasion to call upon a gentleman in a neighboring town, was introduced to his family circle; which consisted of several young people of various ages, from ten or twelve to eighteen and twenty. The bloom and sprightliness of youth graced their countenances; and as

the stranger's eye glanced round the lively party, a glow of benevolence warmed his heart. During his visit he had an opportunity to make some observation on the manners and engagements of these young persons.

One of the elder ladies amused him, for a time, by playing, which she did with much taste and skill; she was considered, indeed, to excel; and it was evident she had devoted much time and pains to this pleasing accomplishment. Two younger sisters were occupied in working muslin, on which they appeared intently engaged: of the excellence of the work their visiter was no great judge; but he observed their dexterous fingers were rapidly producing a very rich and elegant effect: he remarked, too, the interest they appeared to take in their employment. The eldest son, a fine youth of eighteen, talked a great deal: sometimes rattling with his sisters; sometimes giving his opinion on what was passing with an energy and decision that occasionally tempted the stranger to smile. Any question on which his father hesitated, he would settle instantaneously, with a rapidity and positiveness which left no room for further discussion. There appeared, however, an agreeable openness in his temper; but it was a pity that he disguised and disfigured his naturally agreeable manner by a certain *dash* and *spirit!* and by the frequent use of *cant phrases*, which, though easily acquired by every blockhead

who hears them, are yet sometimes employed by young men of sense who are weak enough to adopt them; with a view, it should seem, to show that they are men of the world. He seemed especially anxious to impress every one with this idea just now; and to form a contrast between his own dashing air and the plain dress and simple manners of their guest. Once he cut short a more important topic by abruptly inquiring of their visiter if he played chess; declaring that it was "an excellent game;—wondering he had never given his attention to it—for that, positively, it was an excellent game." Then again, holding out his cup of tea, with an air, to the servant, he sent it back to his sister, declaring that "it was not tea, and that he could not take it." And yet (though nobody would have guessed it just then) this youth was not destitute of sense and intelligence. He had not, however, sagacity enough to discover, that beneath the plain appearance of the stranger, there was concealed a keen discernment of character; and the real knowledge of men and things, instead of the mere affectation of it. Still less did he suspect, that his own silly, artificial manner was at that time the subject of his smiling observation.

But there was one of the party who, while he did and said nothing to attract it, yet excited the minister's attention more than any of the rest. This was a lad of about fifteen: he was rather less

blooming than the other young folks; but his look was not less cheerful, while it was more interesting than any of theirs. He spoke less than the others, and with more modesty; and what he did say was more to the purpose. He appeared to listen attentively to the minister's conversation.

"You have an interesting family, sir," said he to the father, when they were for a moment left alone; "I hope they are great comforts to you." "Sir," replied he, "my children are, I believe, much like other young people: I have no particular occasion to complain of them. But, sir, I *have* great comfort in *one* of my children: did you see that boy, Edward?"—the tears came into the father's eyes as he spoke.—"That boy has appeared to fear God from his childhood; he has long been in the habit of private prayer; he loves serious conversation when we are alone: and his general temper and conduct show that his piety is genuine. Yes, thank God, I have *one* hopeful child."

The conversation which was here interrupted, left a painful impression on the mind of the good minister. The gaiety of the young people, which at first amused him, now gave him uneasiness. The words "*one* hopeful child," dwelt upon his mind. "What! only *one*," thought he, "of this interesting group that fears God! only *one* that is concerned about salvation, and that is prepared to die!"

While these thoughts were passing in his mind, the youthful party continued laughing, and talking, and joking: they were eager and animated in all they said and did; and frequently spoke of things that were of no importance—the most contemptible trifles, with a degree of earnestness, which they would have pronounced to be canting, hypocritical, or, at least, quite overdone, if the subject had been any thing connected with their immortal destiny.

Poor young people!—But we must now leave them and the good minister, who is probably thinking of some way, that would be deemed least offensive, of introducing useful conversation. Reader, we have invited you to this domestic party, only with a view to your own improvement. Do you wonder where the family lives, and what is their name? Rather look around amongst the families of your friends and neighbors; but especially look into your *own*, and see if the description will not suit many that you know. Alas! this is no singular instance.—Observe the trains of young people who fill the pews of our places of worship: behold the gay attire, the wandering eye, the irreverent deportment;—listen to their discourse as they issue from the place; or follow them home; enter one dwelling after another: hear the remarks that are made upon the dress, and other unimportant concerns of those they have seen: listen to their *criticisms* upon what they have heard; and

mark their prevailing levity; scarcely checked by the restraining eye of anxious and disappointed parents; who, sabbath after sabbath, watch in vain to see if the good seed has taken root in the hearts of any of them. Remark the eagerness that is evinced about the showy accomplishments and vanities of life. Observe all this, and say, if there was any thing rare or singular in the description of this family? Alas! in some cases, would not the singularity of such an account consist in this, that there *was* one hopeful child in the family! How many, even of pious parents, have not this consolation;—not *one* hopeful child!

What a melancholy, what a strange state of things was implied in the account the father of this family gave of his children, when he said, that they were "much like the generality of young people!" In other words, that the generality of young people are thoughtless about ETERNITY—unconcerned for the salvation of their souls!

Reader, you are a member of some family: you have brothers and sisters. It may be that some of them are seriously disposed, while others are thoughtless and indifferent. To which party do *you* belong? Are you one of the *many*, or one of the *few*? Does a peaceful conscience allow you humbly to answer, that you hope you may be numbered with the latter, that you have chosen the narrow way; that you have joined the small, the happy company that are walking therein?—Go on

then, rejoicing;—but take heed lest you fall. At present you are ignorant of Satan's devices; you have not yet discovered half the deceitfulness of sin; and it is only by prayer, and watchfulness, and deep humility, that you can hope to avoid these snares. Especially guard against a spirit of pride, and a feeling of superiority towards those of your companions who are not walking with you. There is much danger here to persons who are seriously disposed. But remember it is only by a spirit directly opposite to this—by humbleness of mind and of behavior, by gentleness, by affection, and by an *unpretending* deportment, that you can satisfy either yourself or others of the reality of your profession, or engage any to come over to your company.

But reader, is it far otherwise with you? Are you among the thoughtless ones? are you still in the broad road? still endeavoring to stifle the voice of conscience, and to put away the thought of death? Are you at least resolving to enjoy the world exclusively during the years of youth? Then, be assured, that whatever agreeable qualities you may possess, or whatever specious arguments you may use to satisfy your mind, you are an unhappy, a pitiable individual. You are a being upon whom wise and good men look with anxiety and sorrow; upon whom angels must look with surprise and pity; upon whom God looks with displeasure: upon whom none but devils can

look with complacency. It may be, indeed, that you are possessed of so many agreeable accomplishments, and have manners and tempers so pleasing, that you may congratulate yourself upon the admiration and regard of those around you. But consider, how much of their approbation depends upon their seeing only what is *external*. Look within—search the inmost recesses of your heart; behold in that chamber of imagery the vanity, the love of admiration, the evil thoughts, the high thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God—and ask if you are authorized to feel *self* complacency, or if you deserve the esteem of which you boast.

In order to form some excuse for your neglect of religion, are you fond of detecting errors and inconsistencies in the lives of those who profess it? are you more gratified, or at least more amused, to discover faults in good men, than you are grieved or shocked at the crimes of bad men? What does this prove, but that you are an enemy to God? Consider that, for a moment. Whatever mistakes you may imagine religious people often make, however you may suppose they sometimes deceive themselves, be assured you are making the worst and the most absurd mistake that it is possible for a rational being to fall into; even that of neglecting *the only important thing*: and you are deceiving yourself more grossly than they can possibly do, by imagining that you are wise

when you are foolish, happy when you are miserable.

Now what an unspeakable happiness it would be, if this moment's recollection should lead you to some such reflections as these.—"Yes, I am one of the thoughtless ones of this family; I have hitherto neglected religion; I even dislike it: I endeavor to be happy without it; yet this cannot be even here, and what would it be hereafter? Unless my heart is changed I must perish; and I may never be more willing than I now am: besides, I may not have opportunity in future. What then hinders me, even *me* from being a Christian? —There are difficulties; but how many have overcome them! Why should not *I*? will not God open if I knock? shall not *I* also receive if I ask? especially if I ask for what he commands me to pray for, and what he has promised to bestow.— I will arise, and go to my Father."

But some who have read this question may feel at a loss how to answer it. They know, indeed, that they are not yet what they ought to be; yet they have some desires, and have made some efforts. At least, they are sure that they do not scoff at religion, or at religious people: on the contrary, they respect them and wish to be like them; they read; sometimes they pray; and they tremble at the thought of not becoming one day, decidedly religious: but at present, they are continually yielding to temptation, and cannot yet tear them-

selves from the love of the world. This is the state of many young persons: reader, is it yours? What then can be said to you? So many of those who have, at last, cast off all fear of God, and who are now, it is to be feared, beyond the reach of mercy, have in early life felt just the same, and intended as well as you, that we dare not encourage you with hopes of present safety. But why remain in this uncomfortable and dangerous state? That it is comfortless you feel: you know that you are no better prepared to die than your more thoughtless companions. Why then, will you not at once exchange this dreary bondage for happy liberty—these gloomy fears for joyful hopes—this constant uneasiness for perfect peace? Your faint, inconstant prayers are a burden and a task; but pray fervently and regularly, and they will become a delightful employment.—Delay no longer: you will gain nothing by waiting, but increased difficulty and greater danger. Resolve, then, to be the *hopeful one:* and to gladden the hearts of your parents and Christian friends by a prompt decision: lest, like so many, you go on hesitating till you become finally hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

## XVII.

JOHN XI. 21.

"Lord, if thou hadst been here."

Some time ago, it happened, in a certain city, that the tranquillity of the inhabitants was disturbed by the sudden collection of a great concourse of people. Nothing excites more curiosity than such a circumstance: and so it was now. Persons of all descriptions ran out of their houses, or stood at their doors, to inquire the cause, and to see the approaching multitude. We may imagine, in one of the principal streets, the eager spectators awaiting the gradual advancing of the crowd. At first they heard only the distant murmur; but now the sound of a multitude of steps, and of innumerable voices, are distinctly heard. It comes nearer and nearer; now it has entered their street; and the foremost in the concourse are visible. The gazers look on with a mixed feeling of curiosity and alarm; multitudes appear; the street fills from side to side; and now they distinguish something like standards, waving above the heads of the people. These, which appear to be green branches, are borne in triumph by the exulting throng. For they soon perceive that this is no tumultuous assembly; it is a peaceable procession. The shouting of many voices is heard; but they seem

to be singing a triumphal chorus. At length the spectators distinguish a part where the crowd is thickest, and where the green boughs seem to concentrate; to this part every eye is directed; and each spectator waits anxiously till it arrives opposite his own dwelling: it is then that they discern, among the moving branches, the form of one raised a little above the crowd; all are eager to catch a glimpse of Him; His aspect is dignified and serene: His attire is simple: He looks mildly on the surrounding multitude: every one inquires, saying, "Who is this?"—and the multitude say —"This is Jesus."

Reader, if you had been there, what would you have felt? would you not earnestly have desired that the procession might stop, if but for one moment, before your door, that you might have had a more distinct view? and what if Jesus had turned and looked upon you? could you have borne that look? There were many young ones, like yourself, who saw that sight: many of the young daughters of Jerusalem who joined in that chorus. It was, you recollect, *children* who strewed branches in the way, and cried "Hosanna in the highest:" suppose *you* had been one of those children! But this, you say, was impossible; these events happened many hundred years ago, and in a place far distant from England. And yet may it not be useful to endeavor to realize the scene for a moment; and to inquire what would have been your

sensations, or what they would now be, if Jesus himself were to pass by. Especially as in this case, the circumstances of time and place make little essential alteration, because, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;" and it is He who says "I am with you always."

> "Jesus is gone above the skies,
> Where our weak senses reach him not;"

and because we cannot now behold him with our mortal eyes, how apt we are to forget his presence with us! Ask yourself, reader, how you would wish to have been employed: what you would have chosen as the subject of your thoughts, on such an occasion:—Would you not have shrunk from his view, had they been occupied as they frequently now are? Which of all the vanities that engross your heart and your time would you have chosen to expose to the eye of Jesus? Do you reply, "*Lord if thou hadst been there*, I should have taken care to be suitably engaged?" Remember then that He *is* passing by; His eye *is* upon you; "there is not a word in your tongue, nor a thought in your heart, but lo, he knoweth it altogether."

During the Saviour's visible abode on earth, there were many private companies which he honored with his presence. When he was bidden to a feast he condescended to go; not for his own entertainment, but that he might "be about his

Father's business." Now, might it not have a good effect, sometimes, when we are in company, to say to ourselves, "Suppose we had lived in those days; and that the Lord Jesus was one of this party;—what difference would it make in my feelings, in my behavior, in my conversation? what difference should I have made in my *dress*, if He had been invited to-day? should I not then have remembered some of the apostle's hints about "gold and pearls and costly array?" should I not at least, have been careful to be clothed in *modest* apparel? Say not in your heart, "*Lord, if thou hadst been here*, I should have acted, spoken, and dressed differently, for does He not still know "our down sitting and up rising;" does He not "compass our path;" is He not "acquainted with all our ways?" yes, wherever we are, His holy eye beholds every impropriety of dress and of demeanor; should not this be some check?

It is recorded by the evangelist, that once, "as Jesus entered into the city he hungered:" and this was no solitary instance. O reader! if you had lived then, and if He had passed your door, and if He would but have accepted such refreshments as you could have offered him, how happy, how highly honored would you have thought yourself! There are few indeed, however lightly they may, in fact, esteem the Saviour, but would gladly offer Him such hospitality, if the opportunity were now presented. Well, the opportunity is presented.

There were many women in those days, who "ministered to Him of their substance;" and there are many men and women in these days who do the same. We have his own word for this;—"inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me;" and "the poor ye have always with you." What an honor does Christ put upon us, in allowing us still to minister to Him! If any one then should say, "*Lord, if thou hadst been here*, how happy should we have been to make an entertainment for thee, and to give thee the best that our table affords!" let them try their sincerity by this test: let them inquire, Do we feed the Lord's poor? is it our pleasure and business to minister to the necessities of the saints? if not, they may be assured that Jesus would not value their officious attentions to Himself: for if they really loved Him they would "keep his commandments."

But, reader, when Jesus hungered, would you, had He passed your door, willingly have parted with any luxury, any superfluous article of dress, to procure him refreshment?—Then assuredly you will also be willing to deny yourself such things now, that you may have something to give to His members; and if you do so, this is your reward, that you "do it unto *Him*."

These thoughts are applicable when we are in circumstances that need His special help. Are we sick, or are any dear to us in danger? let us

not say, "*Lord, if thou hadst been here*, I, or my friends, should not die;" for behold, the power of the Lord is still present to heal: it is He who gives to the physician his skill, and to means efficacy; and when he withholds it, it is because "it seems good in his sight."

But the recollection of the Saviour's constant presence, is never so consolatory as when we feel our need of a spiritual physician. Young reader, are you ever concerned about the welfare of your soul? do you ever feel your need of a Saviour, but doubt whether He will hear you? do you feel uncertain where to seek Him? did you ever exclaim, "*Lord, if thou hadst been here*, I would have come to thee like the poor leper, and have said, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean?" O then, no longer say in thine heart, "Who shall ascend into heaven to bring Christ from above?" seeing He is ever nigh thee; and if thou wilt but come to Him, and believe in thine heart, and hear the word that He whispers there, "thou shalt be saved."

Then how gladly will you join the triumphal chorus with those children of old, saying, "Blessed is the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!"

"Not with our mortal eyes
Have we beheld the Lord;
Yet we rejoice to hear his name,
And love him in his word."

## XVIII.

PLALM CXIX. 67.

"Before I was afflicted I went astray."

THERE are few subjects less likely to interest the minds of the young than that of affliction. It is a thing which, generally speaking, they know only by description. They are therefore ill qualified to sympathize in the trials of others; nor are they prone to anticipate trouble for themselves. Very young persons, with but few exceptions, have beheld the world only as a scene of enjoyment: to them the past appears all sunshine, and the future seems glittering with hope and joy. The word *affliction* is scarcely understood: They are aware that some persons meet with misfortunes; but these, by their sagacity and forethought they hope to avoid. They see that others are afflicted with painful diseases: but the vigor and bloom of their youth leads them to imagine that *they* have no such calamities to dread. And when they hear it asserted, from authority they cannot contradict, that "man is born to trouble," and that, "in this world we must have tribulation," they flatter themselves that *their* portion of it will not arrive until a time when the chief enjoyments of life must necessarily cease; a time when they fancy they shall have *no great objection* to being

afflicted; especially, according to the general and unrealizing ideas they attach to the word. It is not needful to use arguments in order to dispel these illusions. The first approach of real suffering, in whatever form it may appear, will do more than a series of the most elaborate discourses to inform them of the reality, the nature, the use, the painfulness, and the impossibility of escaping —affliction.

In the meantime we hope to justify our choice of a subject which may have been thought unsuitable, by directing our attention principally to the *first* word of the text. When the Psalmist says, "*before* I was afflicted I went astray," he refers to that period of life, and to those circumstances, in which most young persons are placed; to whom, therefore, these words must be singularly appropriate.

There was a time then, it appears, when David knew nothing of affliction. While he was yet a stripling, fair and ruddy, keeping those few sheep in the wilderness, the world appeared to him as smiling and agreeable as it may do to the reader. He would have been surprised could he then have read as his own, such language as bitter experience afterwards wrung from him, while he was yet a stranger to the tyranny of a patron, the ingratitude of friends, the malice of enemies, the harshness of relations, the rebellion of children, the disaffection of subjects; to domestic calami-

ties, and public cares: he did not, certainly, anticipate his declension from the good ways of God: nor had he yet discovered that earthly happiness is, itself, unsatisfying; which would probably have surprised him more than the rest. David possessed a lively and fertile imagination: and while leading a pastoral life, he was doubtless alive to the beauties of nature; and his enthusiasm was kindled amid the splendors of distant worlds. Probably with a mind elevated and excited by such contemplations, he was not aware how little the feelings of genuine devotion mingled with these intellectual enjoyments,—and would have been astonished to know that in after years, when better acquainted with himself and with God, he should be compelled to exclaim, "My soul cleaveth to the dust."

But when, with the sanguine feelings of youth, the world in its more captivating forms began to invite his regard;—when in the sunshine of royal favor, and under the secret consciousness of being himself the subject of high predictions, he would have thought it strange, could he have foreseen that he should ever make those sad exclamations; "I am afflicted very much;—sorrow and anguish have taken hold upon me:—I found trouble and sorrow!"

But when in addition to the splendors of a court, the honors of a favorite, the fascinations of society—when in addition to all this, the he-

witching voice of *fame* first surprised him:—when the gratifying chorus of "Saul his thousands, and David his ten thousands," reached his ears—could he then have believed that he should ever be tempted to say, even in his haste, "all men are liars!" Had this been foreseen he would have thought he was destined to be one of the most unfortunate of men. Whereas he was only destined, like other persons, to know the world, mankind, and himself.

It seems, however, that a considerable portion of David's early life had passed *before* he was afflicted: and as this is according to the most usual dispensations of Providence with us, it may be useful to inquire what effect was produced upon him by this exemption from troubles. Of this the text fully informs us;—"*before* I was afflicted," he says, "I went astray." Such an acknowledgment may, therefore, very properly, be improved by way of caution to all those who are at present in similar circumstances. *Now*, reader, *before* you are afflicted, consider what imminent danger there is of your going astray. David, you see, did: although from his youth he was piously inclined, and of a devout and contemplative turn of mind. Certainly he was more thoughtful than many young persons appear to be: nor can we suppose that his youth was disgraced by any immoralities; but yet, he went astray. The world appeared so engaging to him, society so enchant-

ing, friendship so sweet, that his heart clung to these things. He thought of God with reverence; but he did not love Him supremely; nor was he, at this time, deeply affected with the value of his soul, with the excellence of religion: he did not then know, that "*fulness* of joy" is only to be experienced in the divine presence: and he probably mistook some paltry streams of earthly happiness, for those "rivers of pleasures," which he afterwards found flow only at the right hand of God. Yes, it was with David as it is with many other persons before they are afflicted—he loved the world too well to seek God supremely, and in *earnest*.

How necessary then, it is for those who are yet rejoicing, in their youth, and have known no adversity, to inquire whether they are not going astray! and if conscience assures them that they are wandering far from God, let them be assured that, if they continue to do so, one of these alternatives is inevitable;—either He will visit them with some trial which will at once poison their present enjoyments, and, as it were, compel them to seek a better portion; or they will be abandoned to earthly happiness, such as it is, and left to take their portion, here and hereafter, with the men of this world. Consider again, that to turn in heart to God, while the world is yet smiling, is far more pleasing to him, more honorable, and a far more satisfactory test of sincerity,

than to delay to do so till its enjoyments are withdrawn from us. It is a mercy to be able at *last* to say, "*Now* have I kept thy word;" but far happier are they, who having never yet been visited with severe affliction, and for whom this life has still many charms, can yet profess, "Thou art my portion, O Lord, in the land of the living." O, reader, do not think to wait until God calls you by the terrors of his Providence; this is tempting him indeed! You know not how sudden, nor how tremendous that voice may be; nor can you tell whether it will come in mercy or in judgment. Therefore, "*now* is the accepted time;" now, *before* you are afflicted.

But it does not always happen that childhood and youth are exempt from suffering: some are called "to bear the yoke in their youth:" and the Scripture says, it is *good* to do so. There are those who have "*chosen* rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" even for the season of youth. But as afflictions are not in *themselves* desirable, let those who are the subjects of them seriously inquire whether it is good for *them* to have been so visited. If trials do *not* produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness, the afflicted are, indeed, "of all men most miserable." To be loaded with a painful, diseased body, or to look around on a friendless world, and yet to have "no consolation in Christ," no good hope towards

God, this is adversity indeed! For let it not be supposed that afflictions alone are sufficient to turn the heart from idols to serve the living God. When the dresser of the vineyard had digged around the unfruitful tree, then he was to wait and *see* if it would bear fruit. Thus, when the means are afforded, and when individuals are placed by Providence in advantageous circumstances, then the Lord waits to see if they improve them: if not, *after that* He will cut them down. O, then, whatever others do, "if any is *afflicted* let him pray!" let him humbly cry, "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised: turn thou me and I shall be turned."

But some have been afflicted, who having cried to God in their distress, He heard their cry and delivered them. The cloud is blown over; their sky is again clear. How seriously should such inquire whether they can adopt the language of the text throughout—"but *now* I have kept thy word:" or have they forgotten their sorrows, their fears, and their resolutions: and the views they had when in trouble, of the value of their souls? Will they venture to wait the issue of another stroke? Will they add to the anguish of a second trial the bitterness of not having improved the first? Rather let them at once set themselves to rear the peaceable fruits of righteousness:—It may be they have begun to put forth the tender bud:—*afterwards*, the apostle says, afflictions pro-

duce them. The actual time of trial is sometimes too overwhelming for much to be done; but *now* is the advantageous and hopeful season. O, let it not escape unimproved.

These words are full of consolation to the afflicted ones who feel that sorrow is doing its kind office; who can already say, "It is good for me to be afflicted." Let them be comforted by the experience of David. He, like them, "*before* he was afflicted went astray;" and they, like him (if they do not suffer present impressions to die away) will have the unspeakable happiness of being able to add—"*now* have I kept thy word."

## XIX.

### PSALM CXIX. 73.

"Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments."

"FOLLY," it is said, "is bound up in the heart of a child;" and it is accordingly, a general complaint that their minds are so entirely engrossed by the toys and trifles of the age, that religious instruction makes no abiding impression upon them. There are indeed many pleasing exceptions; yet they are but exceptions to the statement. In a sad majority of instances this thoughtlessness and this forgetfulness of God continue during the still

more giddy season of youth; and fix into worldliness, and final hardness of heart in the more advanced stages of maturity and old age. But that it is not always thus, there are many happy instances to testify.

A period at length arrives, not perhaps till childhood is past, when the young person begins to reflect. He is suddenly struck with some of those considerations which had heretofore been urged in vain. He considers that he must die; and yet that he must live forever: and although he has been told this from his infancy, yet it now strikes him with the force of a new idea. He looks round, too, upon the world, upon the universe that surrounds him, upon the works of nature, and especially upon himself, with an inquiring eye. He wonders at his own existence; and feels desires and apprehensions that were unknown to him before. To such a state of mind the language of the text seems peculiarly suitable: "*Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments.*" And well would it be if, instead of yielding to the doubts, and questionings, and vain speculations which so often encumber and bewilder the minds of thoughtful and intelligent young persons, they would at once enter into the spirit of the text, and adopt its comprehensive pra[illegible] such means how much perplexity and confusion, how much pride and opposition, how many [illegible] high thoughts that

exalt themselves against the knowledge of God," would be avoided! "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach his way."

In these words, there is first an acknowledgement of the relation we bear to God as our Creator, *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me!* But who, it may be asked, does not know and allow this fact? there is not a child in any Christian country, nor scarcely among the heathen lands, but holds *that* truth in his creed. Yet this, like all other good truths, may be known and allowed without being felt, or in heart acknowledged. How many high-spirited young persons are there, who glorying in the grace, the strength, the agility of their frame, feel a proud independence even of God himself; who, at least, never think from whence all they are and all they have is derived! Now these words express feelings directly opposite to such a state of indifference;—the feelings of a mind alive to the recollection of being "His workmanship;"—of a mind, perhaps, suddenly aroused from insensibility, to a sense of its relation to the great Creator. Every power and faculty of the body, its beauty, and all the exquisite contrivances which the human frame exhibits, are now surveyed with emotions of interest, admiration, and gratitude. Such feelings are not natural to us, because we are "fallen from our first estate." On the contrary, when left to ourselves, "we forget God;" "He is not in all our thoughts;" and

all his beautiful and magnificent works fail to impress us with any lively recollection of Him, until His own Spirit removes the veil that is upon our hearts. Then it is that we see Him in all that surrounds us, and acknowledge with humble thankfulness that it is "He that made us and not we ourselves." We no longer talk with a heathenish sort of admiration of the works of nature; we see them to be the works of God: we confess that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being;"

> "'T is on his earth we stand or move,
> And 't is his air we breathe."

"We are His workmanship."—What a thought is this! when we raise our eyes to behold the light, when we listen to "the sweet music of speech," or employ any of the powers or members of the body, we are reminded of the admirable skill that contrived them: and how much better would such a remembrance be, than those vain and self-complacent feelings which are too often excited by a contemplation of these gifts of our beneficent Maker; as though the merit and the skill were our own! But when we "come to ourselves"—when our views become rectified, then, while we adore God as the Creator of our bodies, we desire also to subject ourselves to Him as "the father of our sp[illegible]t we may live. Yes, this is the happy [illegible]quence to which serious thought and reflecti[illegible] persevered in, are

sure to lead. Now the desire arises to know more of Him, and to serve Him as his creature. The individual now feels the need of *an influence*, to overcome the darkness and deadness of his mind; and to enable him to know, to adore, and to serve his Creator; that he may praise Him by whom he was so "fearfully and wonderfully made." It was from a sense of this need that the holy Psalmist immediately adds, *Give me understanding that I may learn thy commandments.*

Hitherto the mind had been grovelling amid selfish and unsatisfying enjoyments. It had not even desired the knowledge of God and his ways; and now it is conscious that things will ever continue thus without a power from on high. This is implied in the prayer of the text, *Give me understanding:* "Thou hast indeed," he would say, "wonderfully and excellently formed this curious frame of mine; but oh! let not this be all; for this body with its admirable contrivances must die and perish; this exquisite workmanship must all be spoiled; my reins must be consumed within me; while my soul, which will forever exist, is dark, diseased, and far from thee: sin has spoiled it. Oh then, will not He who has done so much for me already, as His creature, go on and perfect His work? "Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew [illegible] spirit within me; *give me understanding th[illegible] learn thy commandments.*" This is prayer; [illegible] desires are the dawn of

life and happiness. Of such a mind God will say, "Behold I create all things new."

Instead, therefore, of groping in the darkness of our own minds, and wearying ourselves with vain endeavors to rectify our passions, and to become spiritual and devout, this is the straight and easy course we should take. Until the necessity of His influence is felt, no real progress will be made. How sensible David was of this is evident from the language with which he abounds: "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Then shall I go in the way of thy statutes, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." No wonder then, that he made such attainments in religion, and acquired the high appellation of, "The man after God's own heart."

But to what end was it that David prayed for spiritual understanding? it is added, *that I may learn thy commandments.* How many a poor ignorant child is there, even in this land of light, who would think it very easy to learn the commandments without any better understanding than he already possesses! But David well knew the difference between heart and head knowledge. He knew that unless God "opened his understanding" he could never learn his holy law so as to love and to obey it: [illegible] know this, we are not in the way to know [illegible] do any thing that is good. We may read the [illegible]ible through and

through, store our memory with hymns and catechisms, and yet be destitute of all spiritual knowledge.

Those who are discouraged by a consciousness of their distance from God, their ignorance of Him, and by the backwardness they feel to spiritual attainments, may here learn what to do. Let them humbly and earnestly adopt the language, and enter into the spirit of the text: there is great encouragement implied in it: for we must observe, that this prayer was dictated by the Spirit of God himself; he teaches us thus to pray in order that he may impart these great gifts to us. It is His good pleasure that we should know Him, and learn His commandments, and therefore he thus puts us in the way. All we want is in God's gift: all we are *not*, He can make us; all we know not, He can communicate; all we do not feel, He can inspire. "Ask then, that ye may receive."

And when the mind is truly renewed by His grace, then indeed, may we joy and rejoice in Him as our Creator. Then may we truly praise Him for having *made us and fashioned us:* and then too, may we contemplate this curious but frail tabernacle with unmixed satisfaction, and joyful hope; knowing, that although it must ere long be "sown in [illegible]s," it will one day be "raised in power" [illegible]rious body, improved and perfected in all [illegible] powers and faculties: it is

sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Such are the joyous expectations which they possess, who have not only acknowledged God as their Creator, but have also sought of Him spiritual understanding, "*that they might learn His commandments.*" But let it ever be remembered, hat none are entitled to such hopes, none may flatter themselves with such cheering prospects, but those who are thus prepared: "Blessed are they," it is said, "that *do His commandments*, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the City."

## XX.

### ROMANS XV. 3.

"For even Christ pleased not himself."

Our Great Redeemer "left us in all things an example that we should follow his steps." It is therefore an excuse that will avail nothing to say, that he set too perfect a pattern for such erring creatures to copy. They who do not *aim* to copy it are not of his fold. There are many of the Saviour's *actions*, indeed, that it is not very difficult to imitate: we may visit [illegible]k, feed the hungry, instruct the ignorant, [illegible] after all, have little or nothing of the mind of Christ. They alone

who act from similar *motives*, who, in some humble degree, imbibe his *spirit*, are his true followers; and they only will ever be called his "good and faithful servants."

Now, of all that we read of the character of our Lord, there is no part so rarely or so imperfectly copied as that which the text describes. That Jesus pleased not himself, is evident throughout his whole course of conduct. Pity for men, and zeal for God, influenced all his actions: and never did he, for a moment, lose sight of either of these objects, in order to consult his own honor or ease. When, after hours of midnight prayer, he lay down to sleep in the vessel that was overtaken with the storm, it was not that he was inattentive to the fears of his disciples, but that he knew it would furnish a fresh occasion of displaying to them his power and goodness in their deliverance. When, "being wearied with his journey he sat on the well," his gracious intention in resting there was, that he might invite the poor woman who came to draw water, to partake of the living streams which he had to bestow. Whether he labored or rested, fasted, or made one of a feast, he was ever alike intent upon the same objects, influenced by the same motives: "He pleased not himself."

Now, it is only [illegible]stly imploring the influence of his Spirit, [illegible]abiding in him," that we can hope to imitate [illegible]m here. The first dictate

of our fallen nature is *to please ourselves*, and this too, at the expense of others; that is, of whoever may chance to stand between us and our desires. Young persons cannot be aware (for even old persons are not) of the depths of selfishness that lie undiscovered in the darkness of their hearts. Disinterested actions are indeed talked of; but how few of them can bear the scrutiny even of human penetration! how few, then, that of Him "who knows what is in man!" We set out from our childhood upon a principle directly opposite to that which the Scripture enjoins. To *please* ourselves is the grand object, even from the baby that snatches the toy from its infant brother, to the man who aims to be richer, or greater, or more esteemed than his neighbor. Through all the stages of life, through all the gradations of society, this self-pleasing is so evident, and is, at the same time, so painfully felt within, by every one acquainted with his own heart, that the whole world seems to present, to the observing eye, one disgraceful *scramble;* every one aiming, at whatever price, to aggrandize, to please — *himself*. For, although good breeding in one rank, good nature in another, and the restraints of law in the lowest, check the open violence of the struggle, yet it is evident enough that the contest is incessantly carried on.

From such a spectacle, how refreshing is it to turn the disgusted eye towards HIM of whom

alone it may emphatically be said "he pleased not himself!" And what a consoling consideration it is, that there is a way of escape even to *us*, from this tyranny of the selfish passions: yes, in every age a little company has walked this earth, of those who, although not perfectly freed from the love of self, have yet been delivered from its dominion; they have attained to the unfeigned love of their neighbor; and their highest ambition has been to have this testimony, that "they pleased God."

"Let every one of us," says the apostle, in the verse that introduces the text—"Let every one of us please his neighbor." Who would imagine that such a precept had been sent, with divine authority, to the inhabitants of this world! Had the passage been rendered, "Let every one *tease* his neighbor," surely no precept, divine or human, had ever been so generally obeyed!

"Let every one please his neighbor," instead of pleasing himself!—what a world would this be, if there were any thing approaching to a universal attention to this rule. Let us enumerate a few of the changes that would occur in civilized and christianized society, if such an alteration were to take place. It is too obvious to mention, that crimes which outrage the common laws of the community would then cease; we therefore confine the inquiry to those inconsistencies of

conduct which are considered of a less disgraceful kind.

It is evident that, as one immediate consequence of the case we have supposed, there would be an end to all *strife*, public or domestic: no contentions about *my right*, and *yours:* no petty disputings in families, for privilege and preference, if each sought to please the other, and cared not to please himself.

Again: the excess of luxury, and the pride of life, would be no more seen. When persons give rich entertainments, when they decorate their houses and their persons to the extent of their means, these things are done to *show* their neighbors, and to *please themselves*.

Another very happy consequence that would immediately follow, would be the cessation of every description of scandal and evil speaking, from open censoriousness, to the most private gossiping. An ill-natured tale may indeed be told to please one neighbor, but then it must always be at the expense of another; and people please themselves, also, exceedingly, by expatiating on others' faults, because it seems to set off their own virtues. No, not one ill-natured suggestion, not one sarcastic remark, would be uttered, even in the domestic circle, if persons really wished to please their neighbors rather than themselves.

Once more, there would then be no ostentation, no self-seeking in doing good. A person who simply desires his neighbor's benefit, would be as content that another should have the credit of promoting it as himself. We should have *more* work and *less* noise: more business and less bustle. There would then be no more disputes and jealousies, and envyings, and emulation, among Sunday School teachers, about management, and precedence, or whose class is forwardest. Alas! that some of, apparently, the most praiseworthy actions, should be traced to the odious principle of self-pleasing! Is there not reason to fear that amongst the instructers of the ignorant, the helpers of the poor; amongst the most conspicuous patrons of benevolent societies, from the highest to the lowest of them; individuals might be found, who are as truly *self-pleasers* as any that could be selected from the haunts of worldly pleasure?

But, in one word, if the supposed change were actually to take place, earth would at once be heaven. Yes; and heaven is *begun* in every heart, in which the process of extirpating the selfish passions is in progress. Such have already, in a measure, "entered into *rest*." That ceaseless disquietude, which agitates the mind of those who are seeking, as their grand object, their own gratification, has subsided; and they possess, according to the degree of their attain-

ment, that *peace* which the Lord left to his followers.

Let us diligently examine our hearts by this test: is it our grand aim and spring of action to please *ourselves*, or to please God, and to fulfil the law of love to our neighbor? Let our good works, as well as our suspicious or bad ones, be brought to the scrutiny; and if our hearts condemn us in this matter, let us very seriously remember, that "if any one have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Those who, through divine grace, have gained any conquest over their self-love, may be stimulated to fresh victories by the great example of Jesus. "Even Christ pleased not himself:" although he had all the springs of pure felicity at his command. He who was "tempted in all points like ourselves;" yet, so far was he from yielding in any instance, that he voluntarily submitted to fatigue, poverty, reproach, and endured inconceivable anguish. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."

## XXI.

### FRANCIS'S DREAM.

In one corner of a dark warehouse, at the back of a dark house, in the midst of a dark street in London, a little apprentice boy one day seated himself upon a bale of dusty goods, and presently fell asleep. Poor Francis (that was his name) was not at this time very happy in his mind. Though, had he known a little more of life, he would have seen much greater reason to be contented with his circumstances than he now did. He had been brought up in the country, perhaps too tenderly, by a very fond mother, a widow; she died; and then he was bound apprentice, by the assistance of his relations, to a London tradesman. Francis fancied he was treated with little kindness in his master's family. Perhaps this partly arose from his ignorance of the world, and mistaken ideas of what may reasonably be expected from those we have to do with. It is probable, too, he had never reflected that in the view of mere men of business, *sentiment*, in all its varieties, is the most worthless kind of dead stock that can lay upon one's hands. Being quite unaccustomed to the prompt and brisk despatch of London business, he felt at first bewildered and discouraged by the smart orders he received, and

the strict attention to them that was required; and he saw no one around him whose counsel he could ask, much less whose sympathy he could invite. For he was but a little boy, and the tall lads and smart young men who brushed past him fifty times in a day, up and down the long shop, took no other notice of Francis than scolding him when they were cross, and laughing at him when they were merry. His mistress was, he thought, a *very* fine lady, but he never saw her more than once a day from the remotest perspective of a long dining table; and then the tone of voice in which she used to say, "Do you choose any more, Francis?" did not much encourage him to open his heart to her. As for his master, he was so many removes from him in dignity and office, that very little intercourse passed between them. It was one afternoon, after having been employed all the preceding part of the day in the warehouse, that Francis, fatigued and melancholy, fell asleep, as before related. Joy and hope keep youthful eyelids open: but the dispirited yield readily to sleep.

Francis's dream, in the early part of it, was (like dreams in general) too indistinct and unconnected to be at all worthy of record; but it gradually became more rational; and as well as he can remember, it was to this effect.—He thought that he rose to leave the warehouse; but upon entering the long passage that led to the front of the

house, it appeared so unusually dark, that he shrunk back, and would have returned, but something compelled him to proceed. At every step he thought the darkness increased, and the passage became so extremely narrow that he could with difficulty creep along upon his hands and knees. It was exceedingly cold, and Francis experienced a horror altogether indescribable. The passage too seemed to lengthen as he proceeded, and he began to despair of reaching the end, when a dim and distant light suddenly discovered it to him. As he advanced, he found that the light proceeded from the crevices of the door at the end of the passage: and it now seemed as if the apartment within must be illumined with something brighter than sunbeams. When at length he reached the door, he perceived that it was fastened with bars of massy iron, and exhausted as he was, he despaired of being able to force it open; but to his great and joyful surprise, it gently unfolded itself and he entered. And now, instead of the dull apartment he was accustomed to see, he found himself at the extremity of a widely extended lawn, from which arose a spacious and magnificent palace. Noble avenues, spicy groves, beds of flowers, and bowers of roses, cooling rivulets, and sparkling cascades, all shining beneath a cloudless sky, presented themselves to his delighted view. While he was gazing on this agreeable scene, several persons of extraordinary grace and beauty,

respectfully approached him, and with smiles of complacency informed him that he was the sole proprietor of this fine estate. Whereupon they conducted him to the interior of the palace, which appeared furnished with every thing to gratify his utmost wishes; and where he found himself surrounded with a chosen circle of intelligent and affectionate friends, who vied with each other in promoting his rare felicity. But there was something besides all this, which it is impossible for language to express. Over the scenery of a pleasing dream there is spread a rich glow of coloring, an air of enchantment, so unlike the tints and aspect of this world, that they seem as if designed on purpose to form a contrast with the dulness of the brightest reality. Dreams represent things present, as hope does the future, and memory the past. Such Francis now beheld: it was enchanted ground; surpassing even the visions of youthful fancy. The radiant sunshine, the richness of the extended prospect, the hills of pearl and gold that glowed in the distance, the oriental magnificence of the palace—above all, the refined and romantic intercourse he enjoyed with his companions, excited in his bosom thrills of indescribable ecstasy. A milk white steed, richly caparisoned, was now led up by a train of servants, on which he was about to survey the distant parts of his estate: but which, in the tantalizing spirit of a dream, he made repeated and

ineffectual efforts to mount: with his foot on the stirrup, and no visible impediment, something constantly retarded him as often as he endeavored to rise:—at length, just as he was resolving to give one effectual spring—the rattling of a mail coach that drove furiously through the narrow street, with the piercing notes of the guard's horn, suddenly awaked him, and it being now dark, the lamps flashing as they passed on the ceiling and lumber of the warehouse, perfectly restored him to his recollection. Who has not experienced the blankness of awaking from a dream of ecstasy to the dull reality of present circumstances? No wonder that Francis returned to his employments with a deeper feeling of the joylessness of his situation. For several days the impression of his dream remained so strongly on his imagination, that he began to think it must be interpreted in favor of his future fortune.

There was an old porter, called Stephen, much esteemed for his sobriety and fidelity, who had served many years in this business. His good-natured look and obliging manner, often attracted the attention of Francis: and happening one day soon after this, to be sent to him on some business in the cellars, where Stephen was generally employed, he entered into conversation with him: and in hopes of a flattering interpretation, presently related his dream.

"Well, master Francis," said the old porter,

when he had finished, "there is nothing in all this but what you may one day come to, if you do but go the right way to work for it."

"Indeed! are you in earnest?" said Francis, "ah! I suppose you think I have rich relations; but do you know, my old friend (for I don't mind speaking to you, because you look good-natured) that though I am apprenticed to this great business, I am but a poor boy; for I have no father, nor mother either, now; nor any fortune of my own, so that it is very unlikely, is it not, that I should ever come to a fine estate?"

"Not more unlikely than that *I* should," replied the porter, "and do you know, young master, I have good expectations of as great things, and greater too, than any you saw in your dream."

Here Francis expressed his surprise; and with a look of incredulity requested an explanation. Whereupon the old porter said that if he would not believe him, he would show him the title deeds of his estate; and reaching an old brown book from a shelf where he always kept it, and putting on his spectacles, he presently pointed Francis to a part which he desired him to read. The words were these: "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you."

"Dear!" said Francis, that is only a text in

the Bible; do you think I never read that before? You are joking with me, I fancy."

"Oh no, my dear, I am quite serious," said the porter, "and if you will have patience to hear me, I 'll tell you what I mean. I was but a lad, very little older than you are, when it pleased God to convince me that if I should gain the whole world and lose my soul, it would profit me nothing:—I saw that it would be the most imprudent, dangerous and desperate conduct to enjoy any peace in this world, till I had a good hope of being happy to all eternity. And I wondered much (and so I do still) that all reasonable persons did not think the same. So after suffering a great deal of pain and trouble of mind, I was at last convinced that as the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and as he commands every one who hears of it to believe this and be saved, that I, a poor unworthy lad as I was, might come to him, and that he would not cast me out. So I believed that he would save me from my sins, and that he would give me, yes even to *me*, everlasting life. O! it is a wonderful thing! but as God has promised it, who am I that I should dare to doubt it? Well sir, from that time to this I have gone on my way rejoicing. It is true I have had to work hard, and sometimes to fare hard, year after year; and as to the great things of this world, I have had nothing to do with them: but then, I often think to myself,

when I am at work in this cellar, and hear the chariots rolling away in the street above, what does that signify? It is but waiting a few years, and, if I do but persevere in the good ways of God, what great things will be mine! Why sir, God himself hath assured us that there is nothing in this world to be compared with what is preparing for them that love him. Think what one of these mansions will be, that Jesus is gone to make ready: and, to refer to the similitude of your dream, there is but one dark and cold passage to pass before I enter on my heavenly inheritance. O, master Francis, never be fretting yourself because you are not likely to come to such a fine estate in this world, as that you saw in your dream; but rejoice to think that there is something beyond all compare better, God will give you if you do but ask him for it: and forasmuch as there was that, so rare and beautiful in the things you beheld, as you can in nowise express; so, it seems to me to set forth something of that glory of which the Scripture saith that 'eye hath not seen it, nor ear heard, neither can the heart of man conceive thereof.' "

Now, as Francis had not been in the habit of hearing much on the subject of religion, he was the more struck with this discourse of the old porter. Especially he noticed the lively joy that he manifested in his look and manner, at the prospect of future happiness. For it was not mere *talk*

with this good man: he really felt the unspeakable joy arising from a good hope of soon being in heaven. And he was most sincere in saying, that he accounted all the good and great things of this world as less than nothing in comparison of "an *eternal weight of glory:*" and O, how strange, that every one is not of his opinion!

Francis and his old friend had many conversations after this on the same subject. Well would it be if such refined and high discourse were more frequently held in splendid drawing rooms as that which often passed in the dark cellar. The result appeared to be unspeakably advantageous to young Francis. His mind was relieved of a weight of anxiety, and his spirits rose above their depression, as soon as he began to perceive that his real and ultimate happiness did not in the least depend on his condition in this world, or on any of its contingencies. He reflected with sensations of almost overwhelming delight, that boundless, endless, and even present felicity, was freely offered to his choice in the good news of the gospel. And as (most happily for him) he had no "great possessions," to distract his choice, he did not "turn away sorrowful," but joyfully, thankfully, accepted of LIFE and HAPPINESS. Thus, without fortune, without friends, without any of those things which are sought after with such unceasing avidity by the men, and women, and children of this world, and to the attainment of which such tremendous

sacrifices are made, this happy young person found himself possessed of all wealth in the unsearchable riches of Christ.

## XXII.

MATTHEW XI. 30.

"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Is it not very strange and inconsistent for those who profess to believe that every word of God is true, to feel a doubt concerning any plain assertion of the Scriptures. Yet much of this unbelief prevails with respect to particular statements in the Bible. The reluctance which those persons betray towards religion who are but "almost persuaded to be Christians," and who go on from year to year hesitating and undecided, must arise from an inward disbelief of the declaration in the text. Persons who are worldly in their spirit, and who are much engrossed by the business or the pleasures of life, cannot be persuaded that the yoke of Christ is really easy, nor that his burden is literally light. They imagine that, after all, religion demands sacrifices that are very costly, and requires duties that are exceedingly burdensome, so that they shrink from it, and delay, hoping that a time will come, when they shall be better able

and more willing to perform its hard conditions. Thus they tacitly deny the direct and absolute assertion of our Lord himself.

Young persons are especially exposed to this inconsistency; for, not having long worn the galling yoke of the world, nor felt the weight of that burden which it imposes, they are not easily persuaded to relinquish them, nor to make trial of others, however highly recommended.

Some of the truths contained in the Bible are, from their nature, incapable of demonstration: we believe them simply because God has declared them. But there are others which are corroborated by reflection and daily experience: and this, in the text, is one of the number. If Christ had never said it, yet all true Christians would have known with equal certainty, that his yoke is easy: and impartial reflection would enable those who have never yet worn it, to acquiesce in the truth of the assertion.

The only yoke that our Lord imposes on his disciples, is that of "keeping his commandments:" and "his commandments are not grievous." No, for they do but lay restraints on those tempers and passions, the indulgence of which makes us miserable: and they only require the fulfilment of those duties, in the exercise of which true happiness consists. It is far from being the case (as many suppose) that the only advantage of wearing this yoke, is its being the condition of our future

safety:—for it is, the pleasantest companion we can have in our pilgrimage: nor is there any burden so light as that which those carry who are travelling to heaven.

To illustrate this, let the case be supposed of a young person possessed of all those things that are considered most desirable in this world:—of health, beauty, friends, affluence;—the ability to gratify every wish, and facilities in the pursuit of every new desire:—and then let us inquire what sacrifices a consistent profession of religion would require of such an individual; and what influence such sacrifices would have on his true happiness. And since it is too evident to require argument that a life of open immorality, and a series of worldly dissipation produce weariness, disappointment and misery, we shall rather suppose the party in question to have been accustomed to the restraints of a religious education; and to be sober, regular, and reputable in his habits and deportment: so that the change would rather affect the temper of the mind, than make any very sensible alteration in the external conduct.

Should such an individual begin in earnest to "think upon his ways, and turn to the Lord," the first witness to the change would be the closet. There, instead of an occasional and formal service, wearisome in the performance, and leaving a pained and dissatisfied conscience—would be heard the cry of the contrite, the sincere, the

importunate request; or the groan too deep for utterance. It is true, this implies more effort, more difficulty: but is this yoke to be compared with the burdensome formality of heartless prayer? Is the constrained language of compliment more easy and agreeable than the expression of genuine feeling? Is it not easier to ask, however importunately, for things we really desire, than to make insincere requests for favors we do not value? Yes, though genuine prayer is arduous, it is not burdensome: it is service, but not slavery; duty, but not drudgery: and instead of bringing fresh guilt upon the conscience, an interest in all the promises of the gospel is its sure reward.

The same comparison might be made as to the performance of all devotional services. To read a chapter as a daily task, or to search the Scriptures as for "hidden treasure, knowing that in them are the words of eternal life;" to listen to certain passages with an ear wearied by their frequent repetition, or to attend to them as "exceeding great and precious promises," in which we are personally concerned—who, in such a case wears the painful yoke, and bears the heavier burden? And which is pleasantest—to go to the house of God hungering and thirsting for the bread and water of life, or to tread the accustomed path with lifeless unconcern, and to count with

listless weariness the tedious minutes of the service.

But here it might be objected by the person supposed (at least if he would choose to speak on such a subject with entire unreserve) that many heavy sacrifices must be made in order to attend upon public services in a proper spirit. A crowded assembly—perhaps, alas! a *showy* assembly, where friends and acquaintances rendezvous, and where strangers are incessantly inviting curiosity, affords much *amusement*, amusement which it might seem extremely difficult, and more unpleasant to relinquish. To suppress vain thoughts, and to restrain the wandering eye, to forego every unhallowed indulgence, to check frivolous conversation afterwards, and instead of all this, to go with a prepared heart, to maintain a serious deportment, to engage spiritually in the service, and to keep the eye, the tongue, the heart, with all diligence during the Sabbath—where is the lightness of this burden, the ease of such a yoke? It is here;—the conscience would be sweetly relieved from that grievous and galling weight which must, more or less, oppress the minds of those who know they are not serving God in spirit and in truth. Perhaps in case of illness or alarm there is nothing which lies more heavily on the heart of such persons, than the recollection of lost and violated Sabbaths. And, to ascend to more elevated considerations, can it be seriously

imagined that the poor, disappointing, and disquieting diversions of a light and unholy mind, can be compared with the satisfaction and joy of "seeing the beauty of the Lord, and inquiring for salvation in his temple?" "But, alas!" replies the sorrowful objector, "although I know it would be eventually better for me to be religious in earnest, I cannot yet make the surrender. I have so *much* to give up: every thing, indeed, that is most dear to me. I would fast and pray, and submit to painful penances, if that would suffice; but how can I tear myself from those very things that make life agreeable to me? Could *I* become indifferent to admiration?—the very food which sustains my happiness.—Could I resign things that are inexpressively dear and interesting? I might indeed cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right eye, but how could I sacrifice the whole of my earthly enjoyment?"

And is it, then, the case that the yoke of Christ implies such a sacrifice? or does it not rather rectify the mistakes we make respecting the nature of happiness, and purify the vitiated taste which enables us to relish unsanctified pleasures? The Saviour says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you:" and he adds that, "they who resign all for him shall receive manifold more in this present life." And how strikingly do we sometimes see this promise fulfilled! Per-

sons who have made an early and a complete surrender of their bodies and spirits to the Lord, are not unfrequently *distinguished* by his providential favors from those who have shrunk from the sacrifice. And what is the sacrifice? Not the common comforts of life; not the endearing relations of society; not the enjoyments of rational intercourse; not the pleasures of taste or the pursuits of knowledge. No surrender of these, wisely and moderately used, is now generally required. For these are not the days in which the disciples of the Lord are honored with such high tests of their fidelity and love as distinguished the Christians of other times. With respect to all these lawful comforts, the wise and merciful commands of our Saviour impose those restraints only which are necessary to the true enjoyment of them;—which are essential to our welfare, and to all that is amiable, sterling, and dignified in the character. It is true, that vanity must be subdued; but does not the indulgence of it render us contemptible in the eyes of others; and is it not a ceaseless source of disquietude and mortification to ourselves? How peaceful is that breast that is freed from its emotions! How respectable the character that rises superior to its low artifices and mean desires! How easy then, and necessary is the yoke which religion imposes in these respects!

But how much difficulty is implied, it may be

said, in the command "to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do to others as we would they should do to us." Who is sufficient for this in its full and spiritual extent! What! to forego every selfish action, to quench every uncharitable thought, to suppress the ill-natured conjecture, to withhold the smart satire, to rejoice in the prosperity of a rival, to sympathize in the success of a competitor; what unremitting watchfulness, what difficult self-denial must this require! But then, consider how much would be gained by the suppression of those selfish and disquieting passions which reign, and often rage in the unsubdued mind. What peace and tranquillity are possessed by the consistent self-denying Christian! he is, in a manner, invulnerable in a thousand points where others are incessantly wounded. He escapes the bitter mortifications, the sharp retaliations, the disappointments and chagrins which incessantly disturb their repose. While he enjoys the esteem and love of society; peace in his conscience; and the hope of an eternal reward.

But love to God and to our neighbor includes also, activity in their service. "And is this a light burden?" it may be asked by the indolent and pleasure-loving spectator of the diligent exertions of others.—"Is it easy and pleasant to devote all the intervals of Sabbath services to the drudgery of teaching? Is it agreeable to

visit hovels and prisons—the disgusting abodes of disease and wretchedness?" Let the serenity, the cheerfulness, the happiness, that beam in the countenances of those who are most eminently distinguished by these exertions, answer the question. And let them at the same time be contrasted with the lassitude, the discontent, the uneasiness and restlessness, visible in those who have long made their own ease and gratification the chief object of their pursuit in life.

The point in debate has been here argued on the low ground of self-interest, in order to meet the reasonings of those who are not sensible to higher motives. But let us, in conclusion, hear the language of experienced and exalted piety: —"There are many that say, who will show us any good: Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, and it shall put more gladness in our hearts, than in the time when their corn and their wine and their oil increased."

---

## XXIII.

MATTHEW XXV. 2.

"And five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

We are accustomed to employ a great variety of terms, and to make many nice distinctions in describing the varying shades of human character. But the language of the Bible never descends to those particulars. It does not recognise these minute differences to which, in judging of each other, we attach so much importance. "The righteous and the wicked, the just and the unjust, the sheep and the goats—he that feareth the Lord and he that feareth him not," such are the concise distinctions which divide the whole human race in the estimation of the Judge of all the earth. The text furnishes us with one of a similar kind—"The wise and the foolish."

It is exceedingly probable that if the ten virgins of whom this brief account is given, had been described by some human observer, there would have been distinct characters drawn; and it is not very unlikely, that the statement of the text would then have been directly reversed; and that the five wise would have been called the five foolish. One of them, perhaps, would have been pronounced a hypocrite; another an enthusiast; another a bigot; the fourth melancholy; and the

fifth mad. While the other five, who were, perhaps, "wiser in their generation than these children of light," might have been the subjects of high encomiums; for it often happens that those things which are "abomination in the sight of God, are highly esteemed amongst men." One of them, it may be, would have been extolled for her grace and beauty; another for her distinguished attainments; a third for her wit and gaiety; a fourth for her engaging manners; and a fifth for her spirit and independence. However this might be, their characters are very concisely, and certainly very faithfully summed up by Him to whom all hearts are open; passing over unimportant shades of difference, he declares that, "five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

God alone knows the worth of the soul that He has made. He alone can duly estimate the treasures of immortal happiness that are at stake; or comprehend the terrors of his impending wrath. Nothing therefore, in His mind, is wisdom but that conduct which secures his favor; and the deepest folly, that which risks the loss of it. Thus the most sagacious and gifted men in the estimation of their fellow creatures, are often only fools in His sight; and "the foolish things of this world" will one day "confound their wisdom."

This grand division of mankind still exists; and might be traced in every neighborhood and

in many a family. In passing the public streets we observe dwellings of every variety of style and appearance. Some bespeak opulence and splendor; others comfort and competence; others are evidently the abodes of penury and want. But these differences are of little moment. Enter these dwellings and it will be found, that in some of them "prayer is wont to be made;" there are Bibles in every closet, and the fear of God reigns in the family. While other houses, on the right hand and on the left, witness only the bustle of business, the pursuits of pleasure, or the gratifications of ease and indulgence: religion is either banished such households altogether, or the mere form of it is maintained, while the god of this world receives the homage of the heart. Thus might the families of every town and village be classed into the wise and the foolish. And yet this division is too general; remark any particular family where a profession of religion is made; and even there, it will probably be found, that the same separation must be observed. The parents, perhaps, may be seen retiring to their closets to pray and to weep for themselves and for their children; while the children forget God, and care for none of those things. Or while one or two young persons in a family are beginning to think upon their ways and to turn to the Lord, the others remain indifferent and unimpressed; "some of them are wise, and some are foolish."

And might not these words be inscribed on most of the pews in a place of worship? There sits one who knows something of the value of his soul —he hungers and thirsts for spiritual things; and prays and hears as for his life. Next to him, perhaps, is another, who either listens not at all, or hears only for amusement; or, at best, he proves to be but a stony ground hearer, who, "having no root," his good resolutions soon "wither away; or are choked by the cares and pleasures of this life."

It is a melancholy sight to see persons, Sabbath after Sabbath, taking their accustomed places, conforming to the ordinary modes of worship, but without making the least apparent movement towards the good ways of God. They are even content to class themselves with the *unprofessing* part of the congregation. And some are so ignorant and so thoughtless as to say, that as they make no pretensions, nobody has a right to find fault. Young people, in many instances, appear to *rest*, as it were, in their unconcern; as if they knew not that to *them* also, are freely offered all the blessings of salvation: and that *they* too, are personally warned to "flee from the wrath to come."

It is, however, no uncommon thing for the five foolish occasionally to look with an indolent envy at the stock of oil with which the five wise are provided. "I wish I were as serious as such a

one," is the secret language of many a heart;—but this too often only means that they wish they were as *safe*. Why are not such wishes oftener cherished and followed up with earnest importunate prayer? "All things are ready." Let the most careless, unimpressed, and worldly-minded, but rouse themselves to *ask*, and even they shall receive the very same blessings that their most pious friends enjoy. There is oil enough for all the lamps; O, the folly of waiting till there is no time to procure it! When, however, persons do feel inclined, under any sudden impression, to ask, they have reason to take great heed that they do not "ask amiss:" observe the terms that are employed in Scripture, as descriptive of true and prevailing prayer; we are exhorted to "lift up our voice for understanding; to seek it as for hidden treasure; to strive, or (as it means) to *agonize* to enter in at the strait gate." If such is the fervor and earnestness and diligence which the importance of the case demands, no wonder that listless, heartless, or occasional petitions receive no answer.

Judging of others is an idle, uncertain, and most injurious employment. It is not intended that these hints should set any one who may read them, about that unprofitable business. It is not for us to decide who amongst our acquaintance or fellow worshippers are wise, or who are foolish. No; but let every reader put the serious

question to himself; to which class do *I* belong; where should *I* be classed by him who decided in the case of those ten virgins, each of whom held a lamp, and professed to "let her light shine before men?" It is possible that some may feel a difficulty in answering the question, because they are so fully determined to get oil to their lamps in good time, that they cannot consent to class themselves amongst the foolish. But, alas! just so they also intended who at last were told to "depart." In religion, there is no *good* time but the *present time*, and it is the highest folly, perceiving what is good, to defer being possessed of it. Let every one who is conscious that the bridegroom's voice would be to him a sound of terror and consternation, pray with unremitting earnestness to be made "wise unto salvation," remembering that appalling declaration which seems particularly applicable to persons who had made some profession, and were "almost persuaded to be Christians," that "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

---

## XXIV.

ECCLESIASTICUS XIX. 1.

"He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little."

ALTHOUGH this is not the declaration of an inspired writer, yet it is certainly the language of wisdom and experience, and is well worthy attentive consideration. If it had been asserted, that he that despiseth small things shall fall suddenly and immediately, it might have been considered by some as a more formidable threat. But, in fact, the peril of a person of the disposition here described, is greatly increased by the gradual nature of his decline. No danger is greater than that which approaches us by imperceptible steps; since we are not then likely to place ourselves in the posture of defence. Thus, if all the ill consequences of a bad habit were experienced at the very commencement of it, there is scarcely any one so weak or so indulgent, but would summon strength of mind enough to break it off at the outset. Could a person but glance at the future extent, and the massy strength of that chain, which he is forming for himself, link by link, in every little indulgence of an evil habit, he would instantly snap it asunder. But neither seeing this, nor believing the testimony made by the universal experience of others, he proceeds, despising such

small things, till his fall is inevitable and great. Temptation, in its early approaches, is comparatively weak: and a slight effort, a trifling sacrifice, would then be sufficient to overcome it. This is the time, the happy, the favorable opportunity; and he who sees the importance, or (if we might be allowed the expression) the *magnitude* of small things, will then conquer. With what keen remorse have such seasons been looked back upon by elderly persons now bound down by "twice ten thousand chains," who lament, in hardened impotence, that when it would have been easy—when a trifling act of self-denial, a momentary reference to principle and conscience would have sufficed, they despised the small transgression, and thus commenced their gradual but certain thraldom. Observe this most affecting and lamentable sight, an old person in the slavery of sin, and inquire how he became so hopelessly enthralled;—and he must confess it was by *little and little:* the declension was so gradual, that it is only by looking back to what he was, that he can tell how far he has fallen. There was a time when he possessed sensibility; when he dreaded vice; when he felt a respect for moral excellence, and even desired to possess it. But despising small things, whether good or evil, he neglected those early movements of his mind towards goodness, as well as his trifling deviations from it, and thus became what he is.

It is very possible that persons of feeble characters, and possessed of no true strength or energy of mind, may, under the influence of sudden excitation, make a noble sacrifice, or resist a forcible temptation: but, as it has been often remarked, greatness of mind is apparent rather on little than on great occasions. True magnanimity considers no duty too small to be punctually and properly discharged; no indulgence so trivial that it may be indolently yielded to.

In the management of the temper, on which our own comfort as well as that of all around us so much depends, nothing effective will be done but by a watchful attention to *little things*. The temper is oftener ruffled by slight provocations than by great and serious injuries. Now if *because* they are slight we think it not worth while to resist them, if we suffer a cloud to pass over the brow, on every such occasion, the result will be (for such occasions are of daily occurrence) that by little and little these clouds will gather and rest there. A morose or a fretful temper will be fixed upon us; and all power of self-government lost. If, on the contrary, a resolute determination had been made at first, not to yield to these small and frequent invitations, this effort, continued day after day, would soon have strengthened into a good habit; rendering it not only pleasant but *easy*, ever after, to exercise for-

bearance, and to give the "soft answer that turneth away wrath."

It is in small things that brotherly kindness and charity chiefly consist. Little attentions, trifling, but perpetual acts of self-denial; a minute consultation of the wants and wishes, taste and tempers of others; an imperceptible delicacy in avoiding what will give pain;—these are the small things that diffuse peacé and love wherever they are exercised, and which outweigh a thousand acts of showy heroism. That which requires the greatest effort is the greatest charity; and it is beyond comparison a greater exertion to keep a daily and hourly watch and restraint upon ourselves for the sake of others, than to summon our whole stock of forbearance or benevolence once or twice in our lives, in order to perform some deed of munificence, or to forgive a great injury. "Take up your cross *daily*," our Lord says:—it is but a light one, indeed, but shall we on that account despise it?

The truth of the assertion contained in these words, might be illustrated in a great variety of instances. It is applicable, indeed, to all the evil courses, and inveterate habits of wickedness and profaneness that disgrace society. Habits of profusion are commonly formed by thinking little of small indulgences, of trifling, but needless expenses:—more fortunes have been squan-

dered by *little and little* than by large and extravagant sums:—the aggregate of such expenses at the year's end, or at seven years' end, would surprise and alarm many a sanguine and uncalculating spendthrift. Nor is it less true, that a covetous and miserly temper is formed by the same *gradual* process; by petty savings, and little acts of meanness.

But that fall which is at once the most frequent and the most lamentable, is from the restraints of a religious education. This is generally a gradual and insensible decline. A young person who has been trained to the habit of private prayer is, on some occasion, tempted to omit it: it is but a *small thing*, he thinks, to pass it for once; but another occasion, still more pressing, soon presents itself. The conscience, slightly as it was wounded in the first instance, puts in a still feebler remonstrance now: and every time it occurs in future, its voice will become less distinct. In the meantime, other religious duties will be neglected in the same proportion. Thus, by little and little, the conscience becomes insensible; till the individual has fallen so far, as to live without calling upon God, and to forget the value of his soul. And all this chiefly arises from the delusion of supposing that the little temptation to which we yield to-day, we shall have more strength or more willingness to resist to-morrow,

a supposition which is directly the reverse of the truth, and contrary to universal observation and experience.

There can be no appearance more hopeful and promising in childhood and youth, than a tenderness of conscience, respecting *small things:* a child who is never inclined to plead excuses for what is known to be wrong by saying "Is it not a little one?" who resists an improper thought, forbids a hasty word, who fears the slightest deviation from the truth, bids fair to rise, by gradual, but certain steps, to true excellence.

But whatever may be *our* view of the subject, it is certain that God does not, in any sense, contemn *small things.* He looks at motives more than at actions; at thoughts more than at words; and by these we shall be judged.

And let us be thankful that "He does not despise the day of small things;"—the bruised reed, the smoking flax, the grain of mustard seed, the little leaven:—over these small beginnings He watches with patient and gracious care, till by little and little they attain to perfection.

## XXV.

LETTER ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY, WHO HAD REQUESTED ADVICE ON THE CHOICE OF HER PURSUITS.

I SHOULD feel pleasure in replying to my unknown correspondent, if I could hope that any suggestions of the kind required would prove beneficial. You must be aware, that to direct a person in the choice of pursuits, as well as to guide the course of them, is properly the business of a diligent superintendent, and that it is impossible in the compass of a letter to fulfil so important a task. All, therefore, that will be attempted, and all, it is hoped, that will be expected on this occasion, is to offer the few hints on the subject that may naturally suggest themselves.

The period usually allotted to education is so short, and life itself is so transient a season, in which concerns of such infinite importance are to be transacted, that the first thing needful to attend to is, so to rectify our ideas as to view all the engagements and pursuits of life in their just *proportions*. Could these be but accurately ascertained, we should, perhaps, be surprised to see how some pursuits, in the highest general esteem, would either be entirely superseded by others little in repute, or *how much* the time usually allot-

ted to them would be diminished. The various stations and circumstances of different individuals must, doubtless, vary the calculation. To young people in the middle classes of society, the acquirements called accomplishments, are generally worse than useless; because they often give a distaste for the humbler concerns in which it is their first duty to engage; and when unaccompanied with knowledge, intelligence, and elegance of mind, they too commonly produce vanity and affectation; and at the same time form an unfavorable contrast with the manners and habits of such individuals. But even in the higher ranks of society, it is a lamentable mistake to suppose that there is any leisure for *trifling;* and surely it *is* trifling to devote a *large* portion of time to things which have *no* connexion with our highest duties and interests.

These remarks are not intended to apply to the acquisition of knowledge; which should be carefully distinguished from what is merely amusing or ornamental. A cultivated taste and a well stored mind—a mind enlarged by habits of judicious reading—are not trifling advantages; because when duly subordinate to better things, they are important auxiliaries to religion itself. There are many inconsistencies amongst professers of religion—much *littleness* of character, much uncharitableness, censoriousness, and meanness, which may be traced rather to contracted views, than to

wilful breaches of duty. There is a degree of self-knowledge, or acquaintance with human nature, of great use in detecting our less obvious faults, which is rarely possessed by persons of a confined education. It is true indeed, that a tender and enlightened conscience, and close walking with God, will enable us to see our secret sins, as it were, "in the light of his countenance:" but alas! these high attainments in religion are not so general, but that it is desirable to be furnished with other means of improvement, so far as our station and opportunities allow. An *enlightened* benevolence, free from all the petty jealousies of *selfishness* and *party-spirit*, is also most usually found amongst intelligent and educated Christians. And there can be no doubt but that these qualifications are essential to those who are called to *devise* and *superintend* plans for the moral and religious improvement of mankind.

A course of reading must, with most individuals, be regulated by the libraries to which they happen to have access. Would it not be a good plan to select, from all the authors within your reach, the names of those of long established reputation (where that reputation is not tarnished by skepticism and immorality) and to confine yourself to their *best* works? till those have been read, it is a manifest deviation from the grand rule of *proportion* to devote much time to the passing productions of the day (light read-

ing, as it is appropriately called) or to peruse the works of second-rate writers, or those of doubtful value. Thus a good taste and a sound judgment will be formed, which will by no means result from habits of indiscriminate reading.

It is perhaps unnecessary to caution you on the subject of novels: yet, to avoid all temptation of this kind, it would be wise in any one who wishes to preserve an unvitiated taste for what is solid and excellent, and who would "keep her heart with all diligence," to make a settled resolution to avoid them altogether.

A young person who possesses some taste for intellectual pursuits, especially if in this respect she differs from many around her, is (allow me to say) in some danger of overrating the value of these things; or rather of overrating *herself* on that account. Now, as the grand end which we ought to propose to ourselves in every intellectual study, is our *moral* improvement, it is very needful to maintain a careful watch over our minds and tempers in this view: remembering that while sound and extensive knowledge ever renders the possessor of it modest and wise, superficial acquirements are apt to produce an assuming confidence, and self conceit.

It is a great happiness that your education has been religious;—and still a greater subject of thankfulness if this advantage has been suitably improved. Yet, as religion, though of all others

of the highest importance, is the one pursuit in most danger of being neglected, allow me to press it upon you, not to rest in a hope that some good impression has been made upon your mind; but resolve to consider all other engagements as trifling and unworthy of high interest, till this one concern is settled. Allow of no satisfaction in other pursuits till you have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." If that were certain, which is, indeed, altogether uncertain, namely, that your life would be extended to old age, I should not press you with less earnestness to give all diligence and instant attention to this business. It is so very important to your peace of mind and welfare, here and hereafter, that the morning of your days, the best of time, *all* your time should be devoted to God. *How* desirable this is, they only know who are conscious of having spent their most vigorous years in the bondage of self-pleasing. Many defer a prompt and determined attention to religion on account of imagined obstacles: but, in truth, difficulties vanish apace before earnest and sincere endeavors. All things are possible to those who are *resolved:* for what is "impossible to man, is possible to God," who will assuredly impart strength and willingness, and all things needful to those who importunately ask his aid. This is a pursuit worthy of our *ambition;* and in which we should not be contented with mediocrity; but "covet earn-

estly the *best* gifts." Many women are mentioned with honor in the Scriptures; not for their intellectual endowments, but for their faith, their zeal, their charity, their activity. And this leads me to remark, that while young persons are wise to embrace every proper opportunity of attending to the culture and furniture of their minds, yet there are, in these days, claims upon their time and talents of a still higher order. Sunday and weekly schools, Bible associations, and other benevolent undertakings, now happily occupy the leisure time of thousands of young persons: and form an additional and weighty argument against those showy acquisitions which engross so many precious hours. The sick, the poor, the ignorant, are always with us. Habits of active benevolence, when formed with simplicity and singleness of heart, will yield far more advantage to ourselves, than the limited nature of our exertions can possibly allow us to confer on others: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

You see I have written with great freedom; yet not more, I hope, than your goodness will excuse. My ignorance of your temper, habits, and circumstances, must expose me to the mistake of laying most stress where least is needed. Relying, however, on a friendly and candid perusal of these brief remarks,

I remain, sincerely, your friend.

# XXVI.

PSALM XC. 12.

"So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

It is remarkable that David puts up this petition immediately after he had been accurately calculating the usual date of human life. "The days of our years," he says, "are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years," &c. This fact being so clearly ascertained, and so universally admitted, what need can there be to ask assistance in making so simple a calculation? There is no one so ignorant or so sanguine as to entertain a hope of greatly exceeding the appointed term of life; what then is the meaning of this prayer?

It is very true that nothing is more easy than to count over the number of our days; nor is it very difficult, at particular seasons, to admit a serious thought concerning their rapid flight and certain termination. But it is also true, and universal experience proves it to be so, that there is nothing more difficult than habitually to realize the brevity of life; that is, of our *own* life; or to retain a lively and influential impression of the certainty of death. That we are not naturally much impressed with it, is, indeed, one of the

most striking proofs of our fallen and deranged condition. A strange insensibility on this subject is not even confined to the young. Elderly and aged persons, whose minds are not deeply engaged with the things of God, often appear to forget the short step that there must be between them and death; and betray as much interest in the concerns of this life, as if they had never numbered their days at all. So far, then, from this petition being unnecessary, one of the first things we have need to pray for is a lively perception and recollection of our mortality. "So teach us to number our days." Were this concise prayer but universally adopted, and importunately pleaded, there would be an end to all thoughtlessness, all frivolity, all earthliness of mind:—and the world, instead of displaying a scene of ceaseless bustle, strife and dissipation, would exhibit only a multitude of pilgrims and strangers, pressing on, with anxious solicitude, and yet with cheerful hope, to other regions.

That it is not sufficient barely to *know* the date of human life, is also evident from the many mistakes and illusions which exist respecting it; and to which the young, more especially, are exposed. In surveying a course of years, youthful vision views them in false perspective, which adds exceedingly to their apparent extent; and although every step they advance tends to correct this, and to render the line more natural and just,

yet, it is not till long after youth is past, that we can measure our years with any accuracy. Then life begins to appear as it is; and we exclaim, "Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand's breadth, and my years are as nothing before thee." At this period, if the mind be alive to its eternal interests, we set out, as it were, with a quickened pace, and feel, in some degree, the necessity of having "the loins girt, and our lamps burning."

But to the young, days and years not only appear longer than they really are, but they are prone to entertain delusive ideas with regard to what may be accomplished in them. Early in life it seems as though there were an abundance of time to *spare;* and whatever is to be done, whether in qualifying themselves for this world or the next, they cannot see the necessity of doing it with *all their might;* since life, long life, is all before them. Now, there is no greater or more fatal mistake, than that of supposing that any period of life is, strictly speaking, a period of *leisure.* There are, indeed, times for rest, and for relaxation, but there is no time or *season* given us for *loitering;* nor can we ever do so without danger and loss. Every season has its appropriate business: and is all required for the fulfilment of important and indispensable duties. If, therefore, the proper business of childhood is delayed till that of youth should commence, and

if the acquisitions suitable to youth are deferred till they infringe upon the engagements of maturity, a portion of our lives is wasted irrecoverably, and the loss will be felt throughout life.

Another common mistake in looking towards future time, is indulging a vague hope that coming days and years will be, as it were, more capacious, or more extended than the present; so as to afford greater and more favorable opportunities for doing *then*, what we are disinclined to attend to *now*. But how does experience show the fallacy of these hopes! In advancing years, while duties multiply, opportunities diminish; and persons who have neglected the favorable and unencumbered period of youth, will one day look back upon that irrecoverable portion of life with keen and bitter regret.

A still more dangerous delusion in the survey of life, is calculating too confidently upon our own being prolonged to the utmost date. Because some attain to threescore years and ten, and some even totter a few paces further, we readily conclude, or at least sanguinely hope, that *we* shall be included in that small minority. And while fever and consumption are slaying their thousands and ten thousands, blasting the young and healthy on every side, and while sudden and unavoidable accidents are continually holding up their awful precedents, still, because any individual *may* escape them, how apt is he to

conclude that he *shall*, and so to act upon that dangerous presumption!

How suitable, then, how necessary, is the language of the Psalmist! Since, without help and influence from above, we, like the rest of mankind, must inevitably fall into the common delusion in attempting to number our days.

But it is not merely that we may acquire an habitual and apprehensive conviction of the brevity of life, that we should make this request. The important end to be answered by it is, "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." And this means something more than applying ourselves to the outward forms and duties of religion. It means more than profession; and more than that sort of attention and application which does not at all interfere with worldly pleasures and interests. That which the *Scriptures* call wisdom, always implies a deep conviction of the value of the soul; of the necessity of salvation; and a consequent earnestness and diligence in securing it. Under *such* impressions we ask importunately that we may receive our *sight;* and behold with that truth and clearness which is peculiar to spiritual discernment, the limits of our mortal career, as well as the great concern which we have to transact in the course of it.

Then, standing, as it were, on an eminence of thought, we shall take a just and undisturbed survey of the path of life. Raised above the bustle,

the distraction, the clouded atmosphere of earthly engagements, we shall look backward and onward, and measure the short passage that is conducting ourselves and our generation to Eternity. Such a view, wholly different from a vague and general acknowledgement of our mortality, is given to those who seriously ask for a serious mind; and the result of it will be more earnest desires, and more determined resolutions, that the short path which lies before us may be directed through the narrow way that leads to life. Then shall we indeed strive to enter at the strait gate; seeking to do so by the means of fervent, importunate prayer.

Requests like these are sometimes answered in a manner unthought of by the persons who urge them. Those whose hearts still cling to life and earthly happiness, and who are prone to make sanguine calculations of their future years, are often taught *how* to number their days by the means of affliction. God touches some of the springs of life: health is blasted; and then, with a distinctness and vividness unknown before, we see that "the days of our years are few and evil." "It is good to be afflicted" when such purposes are answered by our trials. Our heavenly Father well knows what means to use in granting our requests for spiritual wisdom; and what will most effectually disperse the illusion and obscurity of our minds. Whatever these means may

be, instead of shrinking from them, our interest is diligently to improve them.

The approaching season of the year is thought to render such reflections as the above suitable. There are many who think little of the flight of time on ordinary occasions, who will give a serious thought to this solemn subject at the close of a year, on a birth-day, or on the event of the death of any of their friends. But the experience even of a child will show, how transient and ineffective such impressions are, in themselves. Often "a fleeting hour is scarcely past," before they are completely effaced, and worldly things eagerly reoccupy the mind. Let a recollection of the inefficacy of former impressions, deeply convince every reader who may have been the subject of them, of the absolute necessity of the aid of the Holy Spirit to render such thoughts abiding and influential. If David found the need of prayer in order that he might number his days to purpose, surely it must be the case with us. Let us then all join with deep seriousness in this petition; accompanied with a sincere purpose of heart, henceforward to apply our hearts to true wisdom.

---

## XXVII.

### HOW IT STRIKES A STRANGER.

In a remote period of antiquity, when the supernatural and the marvellous obtained a readier credence than now, it was fabled that a stranger of extraordinary appearance was observed pacing the streets of one of the magnificent cities of the east, remarking with an eye of intelligent curiosity every surrounding object. Several individuals gathering around him, questioned him concerning his country and his business; but they presently perceived that he was unacquainted with their language, and he soon discovered himself to be equally ignorant of the most common usages of society. At the same time, the dignity and intelligence of his air and demeanor forbade the idea of his being either a barbarian or a lunatic. When at length he understood by their signs that they wished to be informed whence he came, he pointed with great significance to the sky; upon which the crowd concluding him to be one of their deities, were proceeding to pay him divine honors: but he no sooner comprehended their design than he rejected it with horror; and bending his knees and raising his hands towards heaven in the atti-

tude of prayer, gave them to understand that he also was a worshipper of the powers above.

After a time, it is said, that the mysterious stranger accepted the hospitalities of one of the nobles of the city; under whose roof he applied himself with great diligence to the acquirement of the language, in which he made such surprising proficiency, that in a few days he was able to hold intelligent intercourse with those around him. The noble host now resolved to take an early opportunity of satisfying his curiosity respecting the country and quality of his guest; and upon his expressing this desire, the stranger assured him that he would answer his inquiries that evening after sunset. Accordingly, as night approached, he led him forth upon the balconies of the palace, which overlooked the wealthy and populous city. Innumerable lights from its busy streets and splendid palaces were now reflected in the dark bosom of its noble river; where stately vessels laden with rich merchandise from all parts of the known world, lay anchored in the port. This was a city in which the voice of the harp and of the viol, and the sound of the millstone were continually heard: and craftsmen of all kinds of craft were there; and the light of a candle was seen in every dwelling; and the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride were heard there. The stranger mused awhile upon the glittering scene, and listened to the confused

murmur of mingling sounds. Then suddenly raising his eyes to the starry firmament, he fixed them with an expressive gaze, on the beautiful evening star which was just sinking behind a dark grove that surrounded one of the principal temples of the city. "Marvel not," said he to his host, "that I am wont to gaze with fond affection on yonder silvery star. That was my home; yes, I was lately an inhabitant of that tranquil planet; from whence a vain curiosity has tempted me to wander. Often had I beheld with wondering admiration, this brilliant world of yours, ever one of the brightest gems of our firmament: and the ardent desire I had long felt to know something of its condition, was at length unexpectedly gratified. I received permission and power from above to traverse the mighty void, and to direct my course to this distant sphere. To that permission, however, one condition was annexed, to which my eagerness for the enterprise induced me hastily to consent; namely, that I must thenceforth remain an inhabitant of this strange earth, and undergo all the vicissitudes to which its natives are subject. Tell me therefore, I pray you, what is the lot of man; and explain to me more fully than I yet understand, all that I hear and see around me."

"Truly, sir," replied the astonished noble, "although I am altogether unacquainted with the manners and customs, products and privileges of

your country, yet methinks I cannot but congratulate you on your arrival in our world; especially since it has been your good fortune to alight on a part of it affording such various sources of enjoyment as this our opulent and luxurious city. And be assured it will be my pride and pleasure to introduce you to all that is most worthy the attention of such a distinguished foreigner."

Our adventurer, accordingly, was presently initiated in those arts of luxury and pleasure which were there well understood. He was introduced, by his obliging host, to their public games and festivals; to their theatrical diversions, and convivial assemblies: and in a short time he began to feel some relish for amusements, the meaning of which, at first, he could scarcely comprehend. The next lesson which it became desirable to impart to him, was the necessity of acquiring wealth as the only means of obtaining pleasure. A fact which was no sooner understood by the stranger, than he gratefully accepted the offer of his friendly host to place him in a situation in which he might amass riches. To this object he began to apply himself with diligence; and was becoming in some measure reconciled to the manners and customs of our planet, strangely as they differed from those of his own, when an incident occurred which gave an entirely new direction to his energies.

It was but a few weeks after his arrival on our

earth, when walking in the cool of the day with his friend in the outskirts of the city, his attention was arrested by the appearance of a spacious enclosure near which they passed; he inquired the use to which it was appropriated.

"It is," replied the nobleman, "a place of public interment."

"I do not understand you," said the stranger.

"It is the place," repeated his friend, "where we bury our dead."

"Excuse me, sir," replied his companion, with some embarrassment, "I must trouble you to explain yourself yet further."

The nobleman repeated the information in still plainer terms.

"I am still at a loss to comprehend you perfectly," said the stranger, turning deadly pale. "This must relate to something of which I was not only totally ignorant in my own world, but of which I have, as yet, had no intimation in yours. I pray you, therefore, to satisfy my curiosity; for if I have any clue to your meaning, this, surely, is a matter of more mighty concernment than any to which you have hitherto directed me."

"My good friend," replied the nobleman, "you must be indeed a novice amongst us, if you have yet to learn that we must all, sooner or later, submit to take our place in these dismal abodes; nor will I deny that it is one of the least desirable of the circumstances which appertain to our

condition; for which reason it is a matter rarely referred to in polished society, and this accounts for your being hitherto uninformed on the subject. But truly, sir, if the inhabitants of the place whence you came are not liable to any similar misfortune, I advise you to betake yourself back again with all speed; for be assured there is no escape here; nor could I guarantee your safety for a single hour."

"Alas," replied the adventurer, "I must submit to the conditions of my enterprise; of which, till now, I little understood the import. But explain to me, I beseech you, something more of the nature and consequences of this wondrous metamorphosis, and tell me at what period it most commonly happens to man."

While he thus spoke, his voice faltered, and his whole frame shook violently; his countenance was pale as death, and a cold dew stood in large drops upon his forehead.

By this time his companion, finding the discourse becoming more serious than was agreeable, declared that he must refer him to the priests for further information; this subject being very much out of his province.

"How!" exclaimed the stranger, "then I cannot have understood you;—do the priests only die?—are you not to die also?"

His friend evading these questions, hastily conducted his importunate companion to one of their

magnificent temples, where he gladly consigned him to the instructions of the priesthood.

The emotion which the stranger had betrayed when he received the first idea of death, was yet slight in comparison with that which he experienced as soon as he gathered from the discourses of the priests, some notion of immortality; and of the alternative of happiness or misery in a future state. But this agony of mind was exchanged for transport when he learned, that by the performance of certain conditions before death, the state of happiness might be secured; his eagerness to learn the nature of these terms, excited the surprise and even the contempt of his sacred teachers. They advised him to remain satisfied for the present with the instructions he had received, and to defer the remainder of the discussion till the morrow.

"How!" exclaimed the novice, "say you not that death may come at any hour!—may it not then come this hour?—and what if it should come before I have performed these conditions! Oh! withhold not this excellent knowledge from me a single moment!"

The priests suppressing a smile at his simplicity, then proceeded to explain their Theology to their attentive auditor: but who shall describe the ecstasy of his happiness when he was given to understand, that the required conditions were, generally, of easy and pleasant performance; and

that the occasional difficulties or inconveniences which might attend them, would entirely cease with the short term of his earthly existence. "If then, I understand you rightly," said he to his instructers, "this event which you call death, and which seems in itself strangely terrible, is most desirable and blissful. What a favor is this which is granted to me, in being sent to inhabit a planet in which I can die!" The priests again exchanged smiles with each other; but their ridicule was wholly lost upon the enraptured stranger.

When the first transports of his emotion had subsided, he began to reflect with sore uneasiness on the time he had already lost since his arrival.

"Alas, what have I been doing!" exclaimed he. "This gold which I have been collecting, tell me, reverend priests, will it avail me any thing when the thirty or forty years are expired which, you say, I may possibly sojourn in your planet!"

"Nay," replied the priests, "but verily you will find it of excellent use so long as you remain in it."

"A very little of it shall suffice me," replied he: "for consider, how soon this period will be past: what avails it what my condition may be for so short a season: I will betake myself from this hour, to the grand concerns of which you have charitably informed me."

Accordingly from that period, continues the legend, the stranger devoted himself to the performance of those conditions, on which, he was told, his future welfare depended; but in so doing, he had an opposition to encounter wholly unexpected, and for which he was even at a loss to account. By thus devoting his chief attention to his chief interests, he excited the surprise, the contempt, and even the enmity of most of the inhabitants of the city; and they rarely mentioned him but with a term of reproach, which has been variously rendered in all the modern languages.

Nothing could equal the stranger's surprise at this circumstance; as well as that of his fellow citizens appearing, generally, so extremely indifferent as they did to their own interests. That they should have so little prudence and forethought as to provide only for their necessities and pleasures for that short part of their existence in which they were to remain in this planet, he could consider only as the effect of disordered intellect; so that he even returned their incivilities to himself, with affectionate expostulation; accompanied by lively emotions of compassion and amazement.

If ever he was tempted for a moment to violate any of the conditions of his future happiness, he bewailed his own madness with agonizing emotions: and to all the invitations he received from others to do any thing inconsistent with his real

interests, he had but one answer—"Oh," he would say, "I am to die!—I am to die!"

## XXVIII.

### PSALM CVIII. 1.

"O God, my heart is fixed."

HAPPY is the individual who can adopt these words with sincerity, humility, and deliberation! Happy at any period of life; but, especially so if it be at its outset. How wise—how good—and how pleasant a thing it is to be steadfast in religion, may be partly judged of by the unhappiness of a wavering and halting profession. It is no uncommon thing for the heart to have certain inclinations, and wishes, and intentions towards piety: even a vain and worldly—a hard and selfish heart—may attain to this; and very often, under some sudden or violent impression, the language of the text has been employed by such a one. "Now at last," it may be said, "I am resolved. This illness, this danger, this disappointment, will surely never be forgotten; I will prepare, in earnest, for death, now that it has been so near me:" or, "I will no longer love a world that has thus cruelly deceived me." But, how transient such

resolutions as these commonly prove, even a short experience of the heart's deceitfulness is sufficient to testify.

The language of the text, as employed by the holy Psalmist, has a very different import. It seems to express the deliberate purpose of a devout and experienced mind—after having counted the cost—after taking fully into account the sacrifices that must be made, in order to a complete surrender of the heart to God—after calling to remembrance the snares and difficulties, the sins and sorrows, that he had brought upon himself in times past, when, in consequence of indecision, his feet were almost gone, and when his steps had well nigh slipped; when he went astray like a lost sheep, and when he had forfeited all the joys and comforts of religion. After such a serious and humbling retrospect as this, and with a lively impression of the infinite superiority of spiritual blessings to worldly good, of future happiness to present gratification; feeling, also, an entire dependence on divine strength to support his resolution, he fervently exclaims, "O God, my heart is fixed."

And now, what is the meaning, the essence, of this determination? To ascertain it, let us first inquire what is the real, though unavowed language of an *unfixed* heart? "I cannot at present decide," such a one says, in effect, "which is best, whether to enjoy myself as much as I can

for fifty or sixty years to come, and then for my body and soul to perish 'in everlasting burnings,' or whether to deny myself some present gratification, and then to be happy through eternity. I suspect that it is better to lose my soul by and by, rather than that one of my members should perish now; at least, I think I prefer (not gaining the whole world, because that is impossible) but to gain as much of it as I possibly can, to the trouble of saving my soul. At any rate I am willing to risk my eternal happiness upon the chance of my having time, and space, and willingness to repent in good time: at all events my heart is fixed in its inclination to cleave to the world at *present*. And in the meantime I hope that that which happens in all other cases will not happen to me, and that my heart will not become hardened by delay, nor my conscience seared by habit. I trust, also, that *I* shall escape all those violent diseases and sudden accidents which cut many off unprepared; and that, although God has admonished us to be ready 'because he will come in an hour that we think not,' yet, I hope he will give *me* a sufficient warning of his approach."

Now, although there are none, perhaps, who would deliberately use such language as this, yet let the delaying, halting, worldly mind, the trifler with his own soul, seriously reflect, for awhile, upon the real import of his conduct, and even of his thoughts and purposes in reference to religion,

and inquire if they would prove to be very different from such cruel and desperate determinations as these. But, alas, that cool and serious reflection which this would imply, is the very thing which the worldly heart refuses, and from which the indolent mind is sure to excuse itself.

By a careless reader of the Bible such a passage as the text, if it arrests a moment's thought, is considered, perhaps, as an expression very natural, and very proper to be used by the "holy men of old," who were religious in a degree that is not to be attained to now; at least the reader conceives he would be quite out of his sphere in attempting it. But after all, these words, if duly considered, imply nothing more than a wise determination on the part of the writer to pursue his highest interest from that time forward; and no longer to listen to those enemies of his soul, who would persuade him to seek his own ruin. It means no more than every one must resolve upon who would be saved. It is only the reverse of that dreadful and perilous state of mind that has been just reduced to plain language. It is safety opposed to danger—wisdom opposed to folly—perfect peace exchanged for tormenting fear—happiness for misery—Heaven for Hell.

If such be the case, can there be a doubt whether or not to make this language our own? But, perhaps, the young reader may reply, "that he has often, as he thought, sincerely resolved

upon a religious life, and really hoped that his heart was fixed in it; and, after all, it has proved to be so far otherwise, that the first light temptation has been sufficient to unsettle it; so that now he is afraid of appealing to God in this way any more." If it be so, let the complainer seriously inquire, Whether those unsuccessful acts of dedication were the result of sudden impulse, or of deliberate choice? Whether they were followed up by persevering prayer? Whether they were made with a due conviction of his own inabillity, and of the necessity of abiding in Christ, in order to do any good thing? Whether, especially, he has built on the right foundation of "repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Desires and purposes, ever so sincere, that come short of this, will never endure; they are built on the sand, and disappointment is inevitable. Perhaps the instability complained of may proceed from inexperience as to the nature of the Christian life. Young Christians may, at first, be discouraged when they discover that, from first to last, it is a warfare—a conflict—and not a state of rest and inaction. Yet, it is no strange thing; it is what they are given to expect, that after the great change has taken place, when God "wrought in them to will and to do of his good pleasure," they should still, and to the end of life, have to "work out their own salvation

with fear and trembling"—with diligence, and patience, and anxiety. And it is no proof that the heart is not really fixed in its choice and preference of the good ways of God, that it is shaken for a time from its steadfastness.

But, whatever ill success and discouragement may have attended former resolutions, still there is but one course to be taken: namely, to repair afresh to the throne of mercy, and with increased humility and earnestness to ask for "more grace," and for that "sufficient strength" which enables the weak to do all things.

Still let your language be, "Whatever difficulties I may encounter, I am resolved to press forward: I have suffered enough already by indecision: have I not heretofore had some secret reserve, and given but half my heart to God, while the world had the remainder? But now I would make a full surrender. Now, I will, by his grace helping me, be more than ever diligent in the use of means, while I am less than ever confident in my own ability to persevere.—"O God, my heart is fixed, establish my goings in thy paths."

## XXIX.

HEBREWS XI. 1.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen."

Of all classes and descriptions of persons on this earth, they are the happiest of whom it may be said, that the things most hoped for by them are the things not seen: and the reason why there is so much discontent and disappointment in the world is, that the reverse of this is generally the case. Things unseen are rather the objects of fear than of hope; while our chief desires are fixed on the uncertain and unsatisfying objects of sense.

When persons profess a belief in, and hope of the future state—in a state of everlasting happiness, and at the same time always shrink and tremble, and manifest only reluctance and dislike at the thought of entering upon it, have they not reason to suspect that their faith is not genuine? since true faith is described in Scripture as relating to things not feared and shunned, but desired and hoped for. And although the natural love of life, our social ties to earth, the terrors of death, the horrors of the grave, and the awful expectation of entering upon an unknown state, may be allowed to make us sometimes

——————"start and shrink
To cross the narrow sea;"

yet, since we profess to believe that the sting of death and the victory of the grave are both destroyed, and that the enjoyments and society of heaven are infinitely superior to what we now possess, there is reason to fear that worldliness of mind is the chief cause, where the thought of death is *habitually* disagreeable. It is certain, at least, that religion never flourishes—cannot have attained that degree which may warrant the expectation of an *abundant* entrance into life, except in the case of those who have their warmest affections and most lively hopes fixed on the heavenly world. Is it not, then, essential to our present comfort and future happiness, to become possessed of such a faith? especially as "without it, we are assured, it is impossible to please God." We cannot imagine that He will regard with complacency that languid belief in His "great and precious promises," which produces no other effect in us than a vague and trembling hope that we shall not everlastingly perish. If we value the joys of heaven so lightly—think so little of the mansions in our Father's house, and of the preparations which our Lord is gone to make, is there not reason to apprehend that we have no true taste for the spiritual entertainments above; and that if ever we would arrive there, we must attain more meetness for heaven? Now

there are means to be used for this good end; and it is in the season of youth, when there is especial need, and especial encouragement to employ such means. There is great *need* to do so, because it is then that the objects of sense present themselves to the view in a thousand illusions, which greatly increase their enchantment. It is then that things are hoped for with such undue eagerness, which, when possessed, wholly disappoint expectation. It is then that it is so difficult to believe that unseen and spiritual objects are really more worthy of affection.

But notwithstanding this, there is also great encouragement in youth to cultivate a spiritual taste: if the profitable practice of heavenly meditation be acquired early in life, the thoughts will ever after flow with comparative ease and pleasure in that delightful channel; and if the thoughts are much in heaven, the conversation will be there also. The vivid imagination and warm affections of youth are favorable to the contemplation of sublime and spiritual objects. Although it will be ever needful carefully to distinguish between poetic or intellectual, and holy and spiritual thoughts of the world to come.

"This," says the apostle, "is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." Much of the opposition that we make to our spiritual enemies is not of a nature to succeed: we may very seriously reason and remonstrate with ourselves

against sinful indulgences, and form strong resolutions against particular temptations, to which, notwithstanding, we yield again and again. This is discouraging: and we know not what to do. Every seriously disposed young reader will be aware of such difficulties as these. Let us then attend to the advice of St. Paul on this subject.—"Walk in the Spirit," he says, "and ye shall not fulfil the desires of the flesh." That is, instead of vainly attempting to combat our depraved inclinations towards inferior objects, we should preoccupy our thoughts and affections with those that are spiritual. It is with idle minds as with idle hands, "Satan always finds some mischief" for them; but if they are preengaged with profitable thoughts, and refined by sublime contemplations, they are much less exposed to evil influence. Besides, this passage is by some considered as a promise, that if we walk in the Spirit, and endeavor to maintain a holy and heavenly frame of mind, we shall be preserved from the power of temptation by Him "who is able to keep us from falling."

"Could we but climb were Moses stood," or could we ascend with St. Paul to the third heaven, and see, in vision, unutterable glories, there can be no doubt but we should be effectually convinced of the inferiority of earthly good. Now a lively faith overcomes the world just in this way: it affords us such an evidence of things unseen,

so shows us the substance of things hoped for, that we need not that the heavens should be rent to reveal the celestial world to our sight, and to convince us of its superiority to present things. We believe God; we give full credit to his assurances concerning what he has prepared for those that love him; so that if one should rise from the dead, the persuasion would not be stronger.

What an encouragement to faith is that word of its great author—"Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed!" "*And yet*," he says, intimating that he fails not mercifully to take into the account the difficulties and hindrances to faith which the infirmities of human nature put in our way: he remembers that we are dust; he knows there is a veil of flesh upon our hearts; so that it is no easy attainment for us to believe in things of which our senses can take no cognizance. But blessed are they who have conquered these difficulties; who, having earnestly sought, have obtained spiritual discernment. We justly consider those individuals peculiarly favored who saw and conversed with our Lord; yet there are, it seems, in some respects, superior advantages enjoyed by those whose mortal eyes have never beheld him. The disciples had not the opportunity of honoring God by so strong a faith as we, who simply trust his word; who, not having seen, believe and love. James, Peter,

and John, who were with him on the holy mount, and there saw his glory—who met with some of the blessed society—saw the heavenly apparel white and glistening, and heard the celestial discourse—what could they do but believe, and acknowledge that he was the Son of God? But we, who have not this kind of demonstration, but admit the sure evidence of faith, thereby "obtain this testimony, that we more especially please God."

When our hopes are fixed on any earthly scheme, how continually is that project the subject of our thoughts; whenever they are for a season diverted from it by unavoidable engagements, how naturally they return again to the favorite idea! Is it possible to hope and wish much for any thing of which we rarely think, or think only with reluctance? Let the experience of the youngest reader answer the question. By this test, then, we may safely judge whether we have any genuine desires for spiritual blessings; whether or not our hopes and affections are really fixed on heavenly objects. "If we are indeed risen with Christ, we shall seek those things which are above;" and they will be the subjects of our frequent and favorite contemplation. If we are conscious that this is not our experience, let us remember, that "faith is the gift of God;" let it be our instant concern to implore him,

with ceaseless supplication, to "help our unbelief," that we may henceforth possess a lively evidence of things unseen, and have our highest hopes fixed upon them.

## XXX.

### JEREMIAH III. 4.

"Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

When we are tempted to entertain hard and injurious thoughts of our heavenly Father, such as our own evil hearts and the suggestions of Satan incline us to form,—when we are ready to suppose him a rigorous and austere master, reaping where he has not sown; or a vindictive judge, delighting more in vengeance than in mercy—surely it should overwhelm us with grief and shame to call to mind any of those numerous passages of Scripture in which he condescends to use the language of affectionate expostulation, and tender persuasion, to sinners of every degree.

Are there not those who form a tacit excuse for their continued neglect of religion, by indulging such false and unscriptural ideas of our most compassionate and merciful Father?—As though He would be more displeased by their presuming

to accept salvation, than by their continuing to neglect and refuse it. This proud and hostile state of mind must be peculiarly offensive to Him, who dwells and delights in the humble and contrite spirit. It is a temper common to our fallen nature, and is more or less indulged by all sinners before they are persuaded to "venture on His grace." But an affecting appeal, like that in the text, has broken many a stout heart, and brought down the high thoughts that had exalted themselves against the knowledge of God. May all who now read it feel assured that God is willing and ready to be a guide and a father, *even to them!*

"Wilt thou not from *this time?*"—There are some occasions when this encouraging inquiry is pressed upon the heart and conscience with more than usual urgency: such as those periodical seasons when we are wont to meditate on the quick passage of life—on recovery from illness—on escape from danger—when changes have taken place in outward circumstances, and even (as the connexion of the text fully warrants us to conclude) after having deeply fallen into temptation, and when the conscience is most heavily burdened with sin. Then, instead of those denunciations of wrath, which are reserved for a state of final impenetency, hear how the Lord pitieth his children!—"Wilt thou not from *this time* cry, My Father?"

But how many excuses are our hearts ready to make; how many specious arguments are brought forward against an immediate answer to this appeal! Any time but *this* time, we are ready to say; but when are we as much in earnest in our desires as God is in his invitations?—none but the present time will suffice us. Amongst these vain excuses, one, not very uncommon, is a mistaken idea that we must wait God's time for enlightening our minds, and bringing us to himself. This is no other than a device of our great enemy, to induce us to delay those endeavors, and neglect those means, which, he knows, if persevered in, would issue in our eternal happiness. When we search the Scriptures, we find that the whole tenor of them discountenances such a notion. Although it is true that God must work in us every good thing, yet we are, at the same time, commanded to "work out our own salvation;" and all his great and precious promises are connected with our praying for the performance of them. "*Ask* and ye shall receive;" God is rich unto all that *call* upon him. So that we have no reason to expect that he will aid us by his good Spirit, unless we continually and fervently implore Him to do so. Here, in the text also, we are required to *call* upon God to be our father and our guide, otherwise, it is plainly implied, that he will never fulfil those gracious offices towards us. But how exceedingly encouraging it is to know, that he is

*waiting* to be thus gracious, and that none who apply will be sent empty away!

A more frequent cause, with many, of backwardness and delay in seeking God, is the sense they entertain of the worldliness and vanity of their hearts, so that they are tempted to consider it almost hopeless for them to attempt to become religious in earnest—so many are the difficulties within and without. But then, they should remember that the great work of turning an evil and vain mind from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven, is not to be effected by our own power or might; we are not required to do it. Our encouragement is this—that "to God all things are possible," and he is not only able, but willing, to make this vast change in every heart that is sincere in requesting him to do so. "A new heart," he says, "I will give you, and a right spirit I will put within you;" but, observe, it is added, "for all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." We must all lie down in despair if it were not for these promises: but since we have them, and from God, who cannot lie, why should we not joyfully, and immediately avail ourselves of the amazing benefit which they hold out? Let it not be supposed that these invitations are given to those who are already partly righteous. No, they are made, as the Scriptures assure us, to those who are at present "far from righteousness," and even to "the stout hearted."

Those who are worldly, vain, destitute of any taste for spiritual pleasures, and quite helpless, these are the persons whom God condescends to invite, and to "beseech to be reconciled to himself through Jesus Christ." What can any reader require more to encourage him, *from this time*, to cry unto God as his father?

Some find an excuse for their delay in the fear that if they should make a prompt and decided profession of religion, they should but disgrace it, for want of perseverance in the good way, and for want of strength to resist temptation, and so the last error would be worse than the first. But this is *only* an excuse; for we are assured that the same grace that enables us to begin a new course, will, in the use of the same means, strengthen us to hold on in it.

Many more objections might be mentioned and refuted, which, like stumbling blocks, we are ever ready to place in our own way. But, after all, if we do but set ourselves seriously and frequently to reflect upon the vast importance of the subject, if we do but consider the value of our souls, we shall not suffer any, nor all of them, to hinder us from pressing in through the strait gate, nor from keeping on in the narrow way. How soon will this life be over! so soon, that if we could gain the whole world—if every wish of our hearts were to be fully gratified—and if those things that are inconvenient and disagreeable to

us were to be immediately removed, what would it all profit? But life, at the best, abounds with disappointment, and weariness, and dissatisfaction: when we attain what we so earnestly desired we feel much less delight in it than we had expected, and begin to think of some new object to satisfy our restless wishes. Thus end the world's promises—not so those of God. Secret satisfaction is experienced by true Christians, even here, in the sense of his favor, and in a good hope for the future; and happiness beyond our power to conceive is treasured up for them in heaven.

It is necessary, however, to guard against unfounded expectations of immediate rest, peace, and enjoyment as soon as we begin in earnest to seek God. We are not to suppose that everything will be granted to us the moment we cry to him as our father. Nor should this discourage us. Real religion is a gradual work, dim at first, but growing brighter and brighter to the last: while a false profession will make a great show at the beginning, and then gradually die away.

There is no instance in which the insufficiency of language, and the weakness of every human means of persuasion, is so sensibly felt as when we endeavor to arouse each other to a due attention to religion. What words can paint the importance of salvation!—What mind can conceive the terrors of refusing it!—God only comprehends the subject, and he tells us, "we *must* be

born again:" for if this change do not take place upon us, it were "better for us we had never been born." May God teach us the value of our souls, and convince us of the emptiness of all those excuses for delay with which Satan furnishes our lingering and reluctant minds!

## XXXI.

### WINTER EVENINGS.

At the present season of the year, when by many an oblique glance, and shy look, the retiring sun intimates his intention of keeping up the old custom this winter, we console ourselves for his shortening visits by anticipating the pleasures and advantages peculiar to the time of his withdrawment. Not all the charms of summer's evening, under its most lovely aspect, can produce more pleasurable emotions than the fire-side comforts of a winter's night. Indeed, to the domestic taste and manners of the sober English, it has appropriate attractions:—while our sprightly neighbors across the channel, whose happiness lies more out of doors, may regret the departure of the time when, "in the shade of an elm, to the sound of a reed," they dance away their merry

summers; we find in winter such a balance of comfort and advantage as fully reconciles us to its approach; and which leads those who reflect upon it to admire the goodness of Him, who, sitting in the circle of the heavens, rolls round "the varied year," and by the continual change of the seasons, has so admirably consulted the tastes, the duties, and even the restlessness of man.

> "Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
> Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
> So let us welcome peaceful evening in."

But ere the shutters close, and the curtains fall, may we not be allowed to take a peep at some of these happy domestic circles illumined by the animating blaze? It is a pleasure even to think of the many, many comfortable parlors in England that exhibit such a family picture every night. There behold the busy work table where the improving book circulates from hand to hand —the lively conversation, and the sweet interchange of the charities of social life.—These are the favorite haunts of happiness, and the nurseries of the private virtues, especially where peace and piety, taste and intelligence combine to grace the scene. And those whose "lines are fallen in such pleasant places," should, indeed, give thanks to God for so favored a lot.

A large majority of our readers, we presume, are enjoying the privileges of a parental home,

and belong to that class of society whose condition the Bible itself has decided to be the most favorable to happiness—those to whom is given "neither poverty nor riches." It is into the apartments of *this* class of persons that we are just now venturing to glance, and such the readers whose attention we beg leave to invite. For, through the opening of the curtains we could fancy we espy on many a table, the yellow cover of a little pamphlet, which we readily enough conclude to be "the Youth's Magazine," and under this persuasion, proceed to address the respective assemblies.

Having already congratulated them on their happy and favorable circumstances, we would next remind them of the possibility of so neglecting, if not abusing their privileges, that the long succession of winter evenings now before them, may, after all, be but unprofitably passed. Listlessness of body and of mind, frivolity, carelessness, or desultory habits, may render the advantages of retirement, leisure, and intelligent friends, so far useless, that the present season may escape with as little improvement to such individuals, as all the former precious winters and summers of their past lives. There is one very encouraging circumstance respecting the evenings of the approaching winter, on which we may, without exception, congratulate every one of our readers, let their circumstances or pros-

pects be what they may: I mean that they are, for the most part, yet *to come*—an advantage, be it remembered, of which a very few months will deprive us. The first moist, mild, and bright spring evening that surprises us with the conviction that the winter is really gone, will be pleasant or painful in proportion to the manner in which we have spent it. Let us at once so begin to employ it, as to ensure agreeable and self-approving reflections for that time! Who amongst our readers will be so happy as to be able, with modest satisfaction, then to say, "I *have* improved the past season; I have made some solid acquirements; added to my little stock of knowledge; strengthened my habits of thought; made some progress in the social virtues, and grown, in some degree, in Christian grace and knowledge?" What a happy winter will such have passed! and this happiness it is now within the power of every one to ensure.

But there may be some, even of *our* readers, who are looking forward to their winter evenings with feelings widely different from these. The pleasant parties, large and small, the long succession of Christmas visits, are the attractions that give brilliancy to the dull aspect of winter to many a youthful eye. And it is readily granted, that an occasional interchange of friendly visits amongst an intelligent circle of friends, is *one* of the real pleasures of winter evenings. But this,

in itself so desirable, is not always restrained within moderate limits: and it cannot be doubted, that where the employments and duties of home are continually broken in upon (though by the best society) no successful progress will be made in what is most important to our welfare and happiness. It is to little purpose to spend the morning in useful pursuits, if in the evening the thoughts are always to be dissipated and distracted in a mixed company. Associating with agreeable friends is of all *recreations* the most delightful; but when, from its frequency, it becomes a sort of business rather than a recreation, the good is overbalanced by a thousand evils; and if this be the case, even with improving society, what must be the effect of incessant visiting with the giddy, volatile, and dissipated, or with gossiping and censorious acquaintances? It is then to *evenings at home* that we more particularly refer, as seasons capable of affording true pleasure and improvement.

Although it must be admitted that young people, enjoying parental protection and instruction, are in the most favored circumstances, yet there are advantages, and comforts too, peculiar to every condition.

That long range of lighted windows, where the confused din of voices and of machinery indicates the close and crowded manufactory, forms, indeed, a strange contrast with the quiet, orderly,

and comfortable parlors into which we have just been intruding. Yet what thousands in England will pass their evenings as well as their mornings here! The air is bad, the work hard, and the wages low; yet even here is many a heart as light as any in the gayest assemblies. Here they enjoy the grand prerogative of honest labor, that of losing the present sense of their real troubles in their engrossing employments; and they are far too busy and too necessitous to be disturbed with imaginary ones. In these respects how oftener is the *wearer* happier than the *wearer!* Then we might think of the little crowded back rooms in every town and many a street, where circles of young females are plying the busy needle, often alas! till long *past* evening; preparing the gay attire of those who are by no means so much happier than the makers, as both parties perhaps may imagine. In such situations as these, if the fear of God and a desire of mutual improvement should prevail, the laborious hours might pass with pleasure and profit, in addition to the cheerfulness which ever, in a greater or less degree, attends on honest industry.

It is not our intention to enumerate all the different modes in which winter evenings may be spent, but there is one which must not be omitted —the manner of spending Sabbath evenings. This is indeed an important and valuable portion of our time; and O, how much depends on its right improvement!

Thousands and tens of thousands of the young will pass this hour at the crowded lecture. How many a serious appeal, solemn warning, and affectionate invitation, will sound in their ears on these occasions, during the present winter! But there are in some cases peculiar temptations to levity and vanity of mind in evening lectures, and therefore a double concern should be felt by those who attend them, to improve the instruction and to avoid the danger; remembering that there is nothing so hardening to the heart, so benumbing to the conscience, as the indulgence of a light temper of mind under the quickening means of grace. Happier, we think, are they whose opportunities admit of dividing the evening of that day between family and private devotions. What progress might be made in the heavenly road, in the course of this winter, by a diligent improvement of those precious seasons! This is the hour for joyous contemplation on the life to come; for deep meditation; for close self-examination; for an improvement of the past engagements of the day; for fervent importunate prayer.

Should these hints induce any of our readers to set a higher value on this portion of their time, and to make a more diligent improvement of it, we shall not regret having employed one of our own winter evenings in suggesting them.

## XXXII.

2 CORINTHIANS VI. 2.

"Behold, now is the accepted time."

THERE is no subject connected with religion more frequently insisted on than the folly and danger of *delay*. But, however trite the topic, no apology can be required for its introduction, while the folly is still, in any instances, allowed, and while the danger continues to be incurred. The persons most inexcusable in such conduct, are those whose judgments are already informed in the truths of Christianity, and who admit a change of heart to be necessary, at some period of their lives, in order to their escaping future punishment; but who, notwithstanding this conviction, put off the dreaded effort to what they vainly hope will prove a more convenient season. Is there not reason to fear, that in what is called the religious world, there are multitudes of every age, who would answer to this description?

Amongst the various fallacies, by means of which such persons endeavor to pacify their consciences, and by which they maintain a degree of tranquillity under such extremely perilous circumstances, the most usual and powerful is a secret persuasion that time and space will be granted them before it is too late. Should they live to old

age, they doubt not that as they retire from the pleasures and business of this life, they shall have leisure, and, at least, more inclination to think of another world: and should they be cut down in youth, or in maturity, they trust that a lingering sickness will furnish the needed opportunity. There are none, indeed, except the most ignorant, who would distinctly avow, either to others or to themselves, that they are delaying attention to religion on this ground; yet, is not an undefined hope of this nature the silent apology by which the remonstrances of conscience are silenced, and the emotions of fear suppressed? To such individuals the words of the text sound in tones of alternate encouragement and thunder, "*Now* is the accepted time!"

The dangerous delusion just referred to, may be strengthened by the habit of drawing false conclusions from the numerous accounts of happy deaths which are continually circulated. The best things are liable to abuse; and these, while they afford much needful stimulus and encouragement to some, are greatly abused by others, to their own unspeakable injury. The worldly-minded and indolent readers of obituaries, cannot, therefore, be too frequently reminded of the unfounded nature of those hopes which rest on the uncertain, and most unfavorable opportunities of a dying hour.

Besides the often-mentioned argument against

such a dependence, that they, like others, may be cut down by a stroke too sudden, or too severe, to allow any attention to the concerns of the soul; it may be remarked, that if there are any individuals who have peculiar cause to apprehend that God, in the fulfilment of his awful threatening, will "laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh," it is they who, cherishing these false hopes, have deliberately refused the calls of grace, during all their years of health and vigor. It should also be considered, that by far the greater number of happy deaths of which we read, or hear, relate the experience of persons who had devoted themselves to religion long before. With regard to the instances that occur of death-bed repentance, especially amongst persons previously familiar with the truths of the gospel, they are so rare, and are frequently attended with so much doubt, that to rest our hopes for eternity on the probability of such a case being ours, is a kind of folly and imprudence scarcely heard of in conducting the common concerns of life. It should also be considered, that while most cases of this kind that occur are made public, by widely spread report, nothing is heard, beyond a confined circle, of the continually occurring instances of a less hopeful character. Individuals are daily leaving this world, by whom religion, if not wholly neglected, had been but very partially attended to; — our places of wor-

ship, even those where the gospel is faithfully explained, exhibit but too many specimens of this kind. Persons fill their accustomed seats with regularity, and pay some respect to religion by their outward observances, but yet make no decided profession of it, and would candidly confess as much if they were appealed to. There is, indeed, a degree of hope not unfrequently attending the death beds of individuals of this class. An alarming illness forces the sufferer to seriousness; ministers and pious friends now surround him with prayers, tears, and admonitions: a dying person cannot be otherwise than sincere and earnest in his desires of salvation; he listens with avidity; he requests the prayers of others, and attempts the much neglected exercise himself. After having suffered grievous and agonizing apprehensions, it may be, that before the closing scene, his mind becomes in a degree tranquillized; he has *some* hope; it cannot be said, that "he dies and makes *no* sign." When all is over, the mourning survivors cherish that doubtful spark for their own consolation; it is referred to, perhaps in a funeral sermon; and hence the neighbors and acquaintance of the deceased, who may be living a life of similar carelessness and neglect, draw a dangerous inference in their own favor, and conclude that they also shall have hope in their end, although they should continue to love and enjoy the world as they have done.

With regard to the actual condition of such an individual in the world on which he has entered, it would be presumption, indeed, to pronounce; "charity hopeth all things," and love must needs "believe all things," in such a case; but, oh! who could have the temerity to say, "Let me die the death of the careless professor?" The language not only of true wisdom, but of common prudence, rather is, "Let *us* give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, that we may escape the fearful uncertainty of such an end!"

Who but they who have felt, can imagine the remorse, the consternation, the hurry, the agonies of such an hour! The reasonable argument which the distracted mind brings against itself is, that, according to the general tenor of Scripture, and according to the most usual dispensations of God with mankind, the great question at the last day will not be—how we *died*, but how we *lived*. The long successive years of life and health form our season of probation, concerning which period it is said, that "every one shall receive according to what he has done in it." Now if this precious season is deliberately and wilfully unimproved; if we have not, at any period of it, believed, and from thenceforward obeyed and done his commandments, a person at the close of life, conscious of this, must reflect with unutterable anguish, that he has placed himself beyond the *ordinary* dispensations of divine mercy, although not be-

yond the possible reach of it; for, "to God, all things are possible." He has (if the expression may be allowed) abandoned himself to the *chance* of making one of an extremely small minority; or to that of forming an exception to a general rule.

The case of the profane and abandoned, of one born and bred in vice and ignorance, who never distinctly heard of the way of salvation, till some charitable visiter comes to declare it to him at the eleventh hour, appears far more hopeful, where signs of repentance and faith are manifested, than that of the cumberer of the ground, of one who has been long an unfruitful partaker of the means of grace. In the former instance, the individual had not been immediately called until that time, therefore his having stood all the day idle need not so greatly discourage him: but, in the latter, the gracious call has been repeated hour after hour, and yet he never went to work in the vineyard.

But to suppose the best and the utmost concerning the final safety of such persons, are we not fully warranted by Scripture to conclude that instead of that "abundant entrance" which is expressly mentioned as the reward of a *holy life*, and of having "abounded in the work of the Lord," individuals thus "plucked from the burning," and "scarcely saved," will "suffer loss," a loss that eternity itself will not repair? If the most faithful and laborious servants of Christ have, at the

close of life, lamented with deep regret, that they had not been more devoted to his service, what a painful retrospect must theirs be, who cannot recollect a single act performed from genuine motives of love to God, and delight in his service; but who have, throughout life, sought only, or chiefly, their own interest and pleasure!

From these painful thoughts, let us turn to contemplate the happy and advantageous circumstances of those, who have it yet in their power to devote their youth, their health, and the vigor of their days to God. Whatever apprehensions others may entertain, every *young* person, whether in health or in sickness, may be assured that *now* is, most emphatically, *the accepted time*, with regard to them. Although they may have been guilty of much sinful neglect in having hitherto disregarded the call, yet it still addresses them in accents of sweet encouragement—this is *their* day of salvation; and shall it be suffered to pass away unimproved? The hope of reward sweetens labor in all the affairs of this life. How much do we do in the hope of a distant and uncertain benefit! The pains bestowed on education, the toils of learning a business or profession, are thought abundantly worth while, because of the expected result. How much pains and labor are bestowed in preparations for pleasure!—many days, sometimes, devoted to the entertainment of a single evening, and this believed to be well bestowed

too. Why cannot we with a nobler forethought, with extended views, act upon a similar plan, and secure, by a comparatively momentary effort, an eternal reward? To keep our greatest interest always in view, is true wisdom. Let us then, in all seasons, consider whether the line of conduct we are now pursuing, the temper of mind we are habitually indulging, the objects of our present pursuit, are such as will, in their remembrance, soothe or imbitter a dying hour; are they such as we shall reflect upon with pain and fear, or with humble satisfaction then?—And oh! let us not be guilty of such cruelty and injustice to ourselves, as to be preparing thorns and briars for that hour!

The threatenings and terrors of the Lord, with which it is needful to persuade the young, and the healthy, are not, however, equally appropriate in addressing the sick, the aged, and the dying, whatever their former characters may have been. Those who have already unhappily placed themselves in the unfavorable and precarious circumstances above described—who have it, therefore, no longer in their power to devote a life to God, are by no means warranted to abandon themselves to despair. Since He still affords them a season, however unfavorable, for reflection and prayer—since intervals of ease and reason are given, let them be employed in earnest application to "the God of all grace, whose ways

are not as ours." Although the shadows of night are fast approaching, the day of salvation is not yet quite closed; there is still a twilight of hope, and He who "multiplies to pardon," may make even *this* an accepted time. But, reader! you who have still the choice to make, will you venture your ETERNAL ALL on such a fearful peradventure?

## XXXIII.

### THOUGHTS ON JOHN THE BAPTIST.

If a party of bold and noisy school boys, many hundred years ago (supposing such things then were) had chanced, amid the rocks and caves of the deserts of Judea, to discover a certain young recluse, of whom we read in those days—what opinion would they probably have formed of him? From his solitary life, his strange and rude attire, his coarse food, his unpolished manners, they would most likely have thought him (certainly by *modern* boys he would have been thought) half an idiot, and half a savage. If they had invited him to join in their sports, he would probably have discovered awkwardness and diffidence; if to share in their mirth, he might scarcely have comprehended it: if they had pressed him to assist in

any daring and forbidden enterprise, he would certainly have refused, and they would have pronounced him a coward. But what is said of this singular youth, by authority that cannot be contradicted? It is said, that as "the child grew he waxed *strong in spirit.*" Now this kind of description is the last, we apprehend, that would have been employed in reference to him, by such observers as have been supposed. So different are the ideas attached by different persons to the same terms! To be *strong in spirit*, they, perhaps, would understand to mean, being daring, impetuous, enterprising in mischief, proud, rebellious; or, in one favorite word, *spirited.* Let us then endeavor to rectify our ideas on the subject, by observing what were the qualities in this youth that gained him so high a character.

Now, the strength of his mind most eminently appeared in his habits of *self-denial;* he was indulgent neither in body nor in mind: well, therefore, might he grow more than commonly vigorous in both. "He was in the desert," it is said; and there coarsely clad, and coarsely fed—he breathed the pure air of the hills, and braved the keen blast of the wilderness:—he indulged in no stimulants unnecessary to his age—he took "neither wine nor strong drink;" and thus his mental and bodily powers were never enervated. Thus he was qualified for those habits of deep thought and contemplation, which, doubtless, prepared

him for the difficult ministry in which he was afterwards to be engaged; and he was entirely withdrawn from the distractions and temptations of the world.

Now, although it was the extraordinary service to which he was to be called, that required this severe and peculiar preparation, yet, we must observe, that a similar kind, though not the same degree, of mental and bodily discipline, is still and ever necessary, in order to the formation of a strong and vigorous character; and in order to distinguished usefulness in after life. Whatever natural courage and activity, whatever good and generous qualities a youth may possess; yet, if he is not capable of self-denial, on small as well as on great occasions; if, on the contrary, his daily habits are indulgent, he will never be *strong in spirit*, but weak, feeble, and irresolute, and easily overcome by temptation.

When the time arrived that called John to his public ministry, we see how admirably this preparatory discipline qualified him for it. How strong was his spirit, and what true courage he possessed, appears from his close preaching and plain dealing with all the different descriptions of persons whom he addressed, and with whom he had to do. To high and low, to soldiers and to kings, he was equally faithful, and gave to each the most plain and appropriate admonitions.

And again, how eminently does the strength of

his mind and the nobleness of his spirit appear in his *humility*. He was a popular preacher—multitudes attended his ministry—all the country people from Judea, and crowds from Jerusalem itself, went out to him in the wilderness. But what effect does all this produce upon him? How does he answer those who imagined he might be the Messiah himself, instead of his herald? "There cometh one mightier than I; he must *increase*, but I must *decrease*." This is *true* greatness, and we are no longer surprised at that very remarkable expression used concerning him, by the angel, to his father Zacharias: "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord." Nor when the Saviour afterwards declares, that "there was *none greater* than John the Baptist." How deeply then ought we to study those qualities, and how earnestly aspire to the attainment of those graces which obtain such high praise from the highest source!

Extraordinary virtues are generally preparatory to extraordinary occasions; and this was eminently the case in the present instance. John did not shrink from the duty of reproving a king for his faults, though well knowing the risk at which he did so; and the consequence was, that to his former crimes the wicked Herod added this above all, "that he shut up John in prison." How happily do habits of self-denial prepare us for seasons of adversity and privation? It is a

question, if John found his prison fare at all less dainty than that to which he had been accustomed, in early life, in the desert of Judea. Nor could his raiment be coarser, nor was the solitude strange to him. When "Herod's birth-day was kept," perhaps, neither he nor his guests (whose appetites were probably palled and vitiated by faring sumptuously every day) enjoyed the feast with so keen a relish as that with which John, that night, partook of his prison allowance. And what a contrast appears between the characters of the king and the captive! While one had so bold a spirit as to reprove the man in whose power he was; the feeble-minded prince had not resolution enough to resist the small temptation to which, that day, he was exposed. In a fit of momentary delight, he made the rash and silly speech of which afterwards he so bitterly repented. This circumstance affords a true specimen of *weakness* of mind; the weakness of a mind which had never been accustomed to restraints—never been exercised in self-denial. When Herod was young, it might be said of him as of John, "that the child grew;" but we may feel quite sure, that it was never *truly* said of him that "he waxed strong in spirit." Most likely he was a spoiled and indulged boy. How long and how well might the daughter of Herodias have danced, in the sight of John the Baptist, before he would have squandered one dish of his locusts

or one cup of his wild honey upon her! unless, indeed, from motives of compassion or hospitality.

At length the hour came, when all the strength of mind and courage that a man can possess were called into exercise. And we may be sure, that when the executioner appeared at his prison door, the spirit of John did not fail him. He knew that his next remove from that door was to the gate of Heaven. "He had fulfilled his course." This prophet, this "more than a prophet," had finished his useful, laborious and important ministry; he had "prepared the way of the Lord;" and now what had he to wait or wish for, but his eternal recompense?

Let those that are now growing tall and strong in body, inquire seriously and thoughtfully whether they, like John, are also growing in *true strength and vigor of mind.*

## XXXIV.

### SPRING FLOWERS.

That is a pleasant and generous kind of sympathy which we feel with the unknown—with persons whom we never saw or heard of, and who never saw or heard of us, but who, we are sure,

must exist; whose circumstances, pursuits, and pleasures are very similar to our own. I, for instance, am an old gentleman, retired from business, of very regular habits. I occupy a small neat house that stands in a row, in the outskirts of a certain town. To the back of each of these houses a narrow slip of garden ground is attached, surrounded with a high wall. Now this wall is very much like every thing else that I ever met with in life; that is, it has a pretty nearly equal share of good and evil belonging to it. It serves at once to keep out the thieves and the prospect. It prevents our neighbors from overlooking us, but also prevents our overlooking them (which sometimes my good wife seems to regret.) It impedes the free air, and yet shelters us from the cold winds; it casts a huge shadow over the walks on the one side, but affords us a few peaches and plums on the other: so that I have often moralized upon this wall. Down the middle of my garden runs a neat gravel walk, on each side of which are several small triangular flower beds, surrounded with narrow walks, which intersect each other.

This morning, after having taken my coffee, read the newspaper, wound up the time-piece, examined the barometer, reported the state of it to my wife, and predicted the weather for the day; and having also fed and dressed my two canaries, all which duties have been punctually performed

in the same order, and at the same hour, for many years past, I issued forth to take the accustomed turn in my garden. It was a beautiful morning; the air having that balmy softness which so cheeringly assures us that another spring is coming;—a feeling so soothing to the sorrowful, so inspiring to the gay. My gravel walk is richly bordered with polyanthuses, snowdrops, and crocuses; and full tufts of primroses, and other early spring flowers already ornament the beds. I take pride in my flowers, I confess; and am not a little curious in them. This morning, pleased to see so fine a show of them, and feeling altogether unusually happy and good humored, it came into my mind, as before hinted (and very much entertained I was with the thought) what a vast number of old gentlemen and elderly ladies throughout the pleasant gardens of old England, were at that very moment enjoying precisely the same kind of pleasure with myself. For the fine and settled appearance of the sky convinced me (who am not a little weather-wise) that its clear blue canopied at that time the whole of our beautiful island. I fancied I could see them issuing forth, like myself, all their coughs and rheumatisms better for this mild weather; like myself, reposing after the storms of life in contented retirement, and solaced by the same cheap and simple pleasures which solace me. It is not while the mind is agitated by the eager interests of youth,

nor while it is occupied and cumbered by the busy concerns of middle life, that pleasures of this kind are most enjoyed. But childhood revels, and age reposes, amid these quiet scenes. Yes, and a part of the pleasure which now in my old age I derive from my flowers arises, I am conscious, from the distant yet vivid remembrance they recall of similar scenes and pleasures of my childhood. My paternal garden seems still to me like enchanted ground, and its flowers like the flowers of Paradise. I shall never see the like again, vain as I am of my gardening!—Those were *poetry*, these are *botany*. How much has passed since I sported in that pleasant garden! All the ordinary events of life have chequered mine. I have, like other men, been awakened from the dreams of youth by the sober realities of maturity. The cares and comforts of social life have been experienced; schemes have been laid; I have been as anxious, as busy, as diligent in the pursuit of these different objects as other people; and with about the usual proportion of disappointment and success. During this period of my life, to have derived any thing like happiness—that is, to have felt an interest in such objects as now, I most candidly confess, really interest me, would have appeared impossible. Nay, I can remember smiling and wondering to see how much my old friends were engrossed in such trifles. But now I wonder no longer. "He who openeth his

hand and satisfieth the desire of all living," has, in his boundless benevolence, provided appropriate enjoyment to solace the feelings, and suit the tastes of every different condition of humanity: and, thanks to His goodness, sweet are the flowers that bloom in the valley of years. To return then to the thought with which I set out, when I considered how many, on this sunny morning, were deriving a wholesome and innocent gratification from the same sources with myself, in circumstances almost exactly similar, I found that the reflection, while it expanded my bosom with a pleasing sympathy, raised it also in gratitude to the Author of all good; and I thanked Him, I hope devoutly, for having (if I may so express myself) taken such pains to please us; such exquisite pains as seem to be bestowed upon flowers especially, so that "Solomon in all his glory" could by no means compare with them. Our Lord himself by inviting us thus to "behold the flowers of the field," sanctions a taste for the beauties of nature, when sanctified by a due recollection and acknowledgement of their Creator. For without this it is but a species of idolatry: and a strange and miserable sight it is to see old people, and many such I fear there are, grovelling rather than reposing in these things, admiring indeed, and enjoying them, but with nothing more than a cold and general acknowledgement of

their Maker. Nor could they truly say that they love Him "*more* than these." There is a sublime interest in His works when indeed we see the finger of God in them, and behold them with a vivid recollection of their being—"His workmanship," which can only be felt by those who know Him too as the God of grace.

And now that I am in such a moralizing mood, I shall go on to say, that the satisfaction I derive from my flower garden, and other equally simple pleasures, reads me a lesson upon life which I would fain read to those of my young friends who may take the trouble to peruse an old man's epistle. Does it all come to this then?—All my eager and busy pursuits and schemes, by which I was often so engrossed as to find neither time nor inclination for calm and serious thought!—Do all my hopes and exertions, and does all my ambition end in these flowers?—Surely "I have been disquieted in vain!"[1] How many of my schemes do I now see were vain or useless! how much has the fulfilment of any of them disappointed my expectations! I can now calmly smile at those anxieties which then racked me with restless uneasiness. I can look tranquilly at least, upon my severest trials, and see the emptiness of my warmest wishes. And I now feel a quiet satisfaction in the ordinary comforts and regularly returning enjoyments of a retired and monotonous life, and

an interest in the few tranquil pleasures it affords, which, however different in kind, equal I believe as to the degree of real happiness, what I have ever derived from things which are regarded as the chief pleasures of life.

As I said before, I am aware of, for I can remember, the feeling of wonder and pity, and something not unlike contempt, with which the regular habits and sober enjoyments of old people are regarded by the young; and it must be granted too, that some elderly people have their *odd ways*, which give a little occasion for such remarks (though as for my wife and I, nobody can say that we are any thing more than a little particular not to be put out of our old customs.) Nevertheless, however dissatisfied any young readers may be with the prospect, I cannot predict, nor even wish any thing better for them, than that, after the cares and vicissitudes of active life, they may be indulged with a season of repose and tranquillity, in some such quiet retreat as my own; that they may then be able to look back upon the past as not wholly devoted to worldly schemes and pursuits, but marked also by a course of activity and usefulness in the cause of God and their neighbor; and that the sublime hopes of another life may be the support and solace of their declining years. And as for their amusements, I shall wish nothing better for them than that they may be able to taste an innocent and salutary delight in the

good, gay, and well dressed company which a little flower garden displays to view on a fine spring morning.

## XXXV.

### CONVERSATION IN A LIBRARY.

A FATHER and his son having passed some hours very agreeably in surveying the various magnificent apartments of a nobleman's seat, sat down to rest awhile in the spacious and well furnished library, which was celebrated as containing as complete a collection of ancient and modern literature as any private one in the country. As their eyes wandered leisurely over this curious congregated mass of human thought, reflections natural on such an occasion passed silently in the mind of each; and at length gave rise to the following conversation; which, should it prove somewhat desultory, the candid reader will please to remember that the speakers were fatigued.

FATHER. What think you, Arthur—should such a sight as this impress us most forcibly with the greatness or the littleness of the mind of man?

ARTHUR. With its greatness, surely, should it not? for what an immense number of clever men must have lived in the world to write such a number of books, and how *very* clever some of them were!

FATHER. They were so indeed, compared with other men — but the question is, whether the united ingenuity and cleverness of all mankind does not rather tend to expose the narrow bounds of human knowledge, and the feeble powers of the human intellect, than to exalt them. It is indeed the conclusion which the wisest of men, and the most profound philosophers have come to, as the result of their most laborious researches in the pursuit of truth and knowledge, that the more they know, the more they discover how little can be known.

ARTHUR. But still what very useful and ingenious discoveries have been made in science and philosophy.

FATHER. That is true; and it is one proof of the good sense and superior light of modern times, that the researches of science are now confined to practical purposes, and such as are of real utility; while vague hypothesis, and barren speculation are abandoned. But then this very circumstance shows that the limited extent of man's powers and operations is acknowledged by common consent.

ARTHUR. What an immense sum all these books must have cost! It is at least one advantage of being rich — having it in one's power to possess such a capital library.

FATHER. Indeed it is; however it is gratifying to reflect that the choicest productions of litera-

ture are by no means confined to the opulent; for although persons in moderate circumstances cannot enjoy the indulgence and luxury of possessing such a complete collection, yet the few works of the few great geniuses that have appeared in the world are so easily procured, as to be within the reach of most persons who are capable of appreciating them. There is no monopoly or aristocracy in literature. Its *richest* treasures are generally and easily accessible. It is really a curious, and certainly a gratifying thought, that the sublime imaginings of our greatest poet — those thoughts which were produced at such an incalculable expense of mental labor, are contained in so small a compass (as indeed all *sublime* imaginings must be) that they may be procured for a sum that any decent lad may soon save from his weekly allowance. Thus it is, by the kind and wise arrangements of Providence, that, while great riches and worldly honor are the portion only of a few, and unattainable, generally speaking, by those who have them not; yet, that all that is of *intrinsic worth* in this world—knowledge and virtue, are placed within the reach of every one who diligently seeks them. For with regard to the most important and interesting discoveries of science, the grand results are known even to the vulgar: and the most material facts are of no difficult access. If it were necessary to possess all these books, and in their splendid bindings too,

in order to know what Newton discovered, or to enjoy what Milton thought, gold would indeed attain a value and a dignity, which no image or superscription whatever has yet stamped upon it.

ARTHUR. When one is looking at such a number of books, it is amusing to observe what very different subjects different writers have chosen.

FATHER. Yes, and it is well they have. We are apt to feel discontent, and sometimes contempt, when we meet with people whose tastes, pursuits, and opinions differ widely from our own; yet, to this circumstance (the vast variety of tastes, pursuits, and opinions that exists amongst men) is chiefly to be attributed the progress that has been made in useful knowledge. Only suppose that all thinking men had been of one opinion on every point of philosophy, and exactly agreed on all matters of taste, how little stimulus would there have been to thought and invention; and what a dull uniformity in the few writings that would have been produced. Nothing, therefore, is more narrow or illiberal, than to regret the diversity of opinion and taste that exists; since it is the grand means which Providence has appointed for keeping the human mind from stagnation, and for eliciting truth. We should therefore learn, not only to tolerate but to respect the views and predilections of other people, however they may differ from our own.

ARTHUR. Yet surely we ought to regret it when

we think, and are almost sure, that people are in the wrong?

FATHER. We ought to be very sure of that indeed, before we even regret it; there are, however, some errors of opinion, which are so injurious in their consequences, and which show such a perversion of mind in those who hold them, that we ought not only to regret but to counteract them by every fair and gentle means in our power. But there are very widely differing opinions, on less essential points, amongst persons of equal piety, learning, and genius; and while it is both curious and instructive to observe this, it is, at the same time, most consoling and satisfactory to remark how, in all things most important, the wise and good agree. Observe that large compartment opposite to us, entirely occupied by works on divinity. Doubtless there is much error and much lumber mingled there with what is valuable and true. Yet with respect to all those amongst these writers who may be fairly called men of piety, what a happy harmony would, after all, be found to exist in their sentiments! There is, indeed, no consideration more satisfactory to the inquiring mind, than this universal agreement of good men, in opinion and experience, on essential points. Nor is there any reflection more impressive than to consider the weight of argument and force of persuasion which their *united* testimony affords, as to the importance of the sub-

jects on which they write. Thus, the very sight of these books preaches silently as persuasive and eloquent a sermon as can be heard from any pulpit.

ARTHUR. Then, father, it seems one may, by a little reflection, get more good from the outside of a book, than many people do from its contents.

FATHER. Why truly, it is more profitable to reflect without reading, than to read without reflecting. But let us suppose, that all the forcible arguments, lively representations, affecting appeals—all the warnings, threatenings, invitations, persuasions, that the piety, benevolence, and genius of these various writers have employed (with their "diversity of gifts but the same Spirit") in reminding mankind of the infinite importance of their eternal interests—suppose, I say, that all this mass of persuasion could be collected into a focus, and with its united force bear upon the mind—would not the effect be overpowering?—and yet this would be no false impression: nothing more than the real nature of the case would justify; no more than we should constantly feel if our minds were not blinded with sin, and rendered strangely insensible by earthly objects.

ARTHUR. But how would it be possible to retain such a strong impression, supposing one could feel it for a moment?

FATHER. We must remember that, after all,

no power of human eloquence, nor all its powers united, would be sufficient to enlighten the darkness of the mind of man. But one ray of light from above—one powerful word from Him who can open the eyes of the understanding, and cause things to be "spiritually discerned," will instantly effect the happy purpose. Therefore, however diligent we might be in using and improving every means for exciting profitable impressions, all would be vain, unless we are perpetually seeking this all-powerful influence. But, if we do ask and seek it earnestly, God will assuredly bestow it; even that habitual impression of the superior importance of our future and eternal interests which constitutes a spiritual mind; and which will cause our affections and conversation to be in heaven.

ARTHUR. There are many books not exactly on religious subjects, that yet are very profitable.

FATHER. Yes; and this is the case even with the writings of some men who were wholly ignorant of true religion, and which affords indeed, an additional argument in favor of it. Men of thought, wisdom, and genius, in the darkest times, have borne witness to the truth of the divine declaration, that "wisdom excelleth folly, as much as light excelleth darkness." The laws of God, written in the hearts and consciences, even of them who "knew not God," are thus vindicated and enforced. So that when either in thought,

word, or action, we offend against them, we at the same time oppose the combined sense, wisdom, experience, and the general testimony of all mankind.

Solomon, I dare say, was never in such a library as this; yet he expresses a sentiment which is very suitable on such an occasion, when he sums up all the sage reflections he had been making on the vanity of the world in this concise sentence; —"Of making many books there is no end:" (he would indeed have thought so, if he had lived in these days!)—and he evidently spoke from experience, when he added, "that much study is a weariness to the flesh." "Let us then," he says, "hear the conclusion of the whole matter;—Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty, and the whole wisdom of man."

## XXXVI.

### EVENING THOUGHTS.

The hours have danced their joyous round,
  Adorned in flowers of May;
Till each in turn, with mercy crowned,
  Has come and passed away.

The constant sun has run his race
  Athwart the boundless deep;
And ne'er amid that trackless space
  Has failed his path to keep.

The earth has drank the morning dew,
  And fed her flowery train;
The flowers have spread their charms to view,
  And decked the earth again.

Now evening's lengthened shadows spread
  To curtain them around,
And each reclines her modest head,
  In gentle slumbers bound.

Beasts, strong to labor, o'er the lea
  Have drawn the cumbrous plough;
And feed in pastures, glad and free,
  Their toil accomplished now.

Laborious man fulfils his task,
  And seeks repose; but I—
Is mine accomplished?—let me ask—
  And conscience shall reply.

Birds, beasts, and trees, unmoved by choice,
  Have each improved the day,
Obedient still to Nature's voice:—
  But whose did I obey?

Were Christ's commands before my sight
  In all I thought and spoke?
And have I borne his burden light,
  And worn his easy yoke?

Have pride or wrath disturbed my breast,
  Or wishes wild and vain?
Has sinful sloth my powers possessed,
  And bound them in its chain?

Has not my resolution failed?
  Lord, search, for thou didst see;
And has not base self-love prevailed
  Instead of love to thee?

Did I this day, for small or great,
  My own pursuits forego,
To lighten by a feather's weight
  The mass of human wo?

'Mid cares and hopes and pleasures mean
  With eager fondness sought,
Oh, has one glance at things unseen
  Sublimed my earthly thought?

Has grace, descending from above
  This evil heart possessed?
In meekness, patience, truth and love,
  To all around expressed?

Great is the peace such grace bestows
  'Mid storms of earthly strife;
And calm and sweet is their repose
  Who live this hidden life.

If thus my cheerful hours had sped,
  How blest the day's decline?
'T is past!—but though forever fled,
  To-MORROW still is mine.

## XXXVII.

PSALM CXIX. 19.

"I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me."

Our life is so short when compared with the long rolling ages that have preceded, and those which probably will follow; so short, if we estimate what we have to accomplish in it; so short, compared with the interminable period beyond this present scene; that each individual who starts into existence is indeed like a stranger stranded on a foreign shore, where all around him is new and unexpected, and where the brief sojourn he is to make is insufficient fully to acquaint him with the nature of the country, the characters of its inhabitants, and with his own relation to them. Were it so ordered that we, like our first parents, awoke into being with all our powers and faculties in a state of maturity, how overpowering would be the surprise, the transport, and the apprehension; how unspeakably important would appear the gift of existence! and how awful the terms of that existence!—born to die—and yet to live: and our never-ending weal or wo depending on the manner in which this short prelude to futurity should be spent: and on the preference we may give to the con-

cerns of an endless life over those of this brief passage to it.

But instead of such an overwhelming impression, these wondrous circumstances of our condition break so gradually upon the mind, as it slowly emerges from the mists of infancy and wakens from the dreams of childhood, that it is only at some rare moments of deep thought or strong excitement, that we can feel any adequate consciousness of the strangeness and awfulness of our state. There are many, doubtless, who pass through life without one such startling recollection. But with those whose minds have been cultivated, and who are at all disposed to reflection, it is scarcely possible but that such feelings should occasionally interrupt the ordinary current of thought. In youth, when the mind begins to expand, when the imagination is most vivid, and when existence is really new, it is then that such impressions are most frequent, most powerful, and most capable of improvement.

"I am a stranger in the earth—a stranger to myself and to all around me; all seems mysterious and marvellous: the more I think, the more I am lost in uncertainty, and overwhelmed with the confused consciousness of being; and in fearful apprehensions concerning my future existence. To whom can I turn but to Him who made me and fashioned me, who when my spirit is overwhelmed within me, knows the path I should take?

Hide not, then, thy commandments from me." When such thoughts and feelings glance across the mind, they should be arrested and detained, till the convictions to which they lead are deeply impressed; and we see it to be our grand business, interest, and happiness in this short life, "to know God, that we may enjoy him forever."

The feeling of being but strangers and sojourners here is by no means natural to us; on the contrary, so strong are our earthly attachments, and such is the force of habit and the influence of sensible objects, that it is difficult enough to feel otherwise than at home in this world, and not to wish that we could find a rest in it. Even the daily evidence we have of our uncertain possession of it, in the warnings which diseases and death are continually holding up to view, is insufficient to produce more than a momentary recollection. Hence the necessity of prayer; of such appropriate petitions as those with which David never failed to follow up his own reflections; knowing that otherwise they would be wholly unprofitable to him. And when he prayed that God would not "hide his commandments from him," he surely meant something more than that he might become accurately acquainted with the laws of God contained in his word. There can be no doubt that he was already well furnished with this head knowledge; but he knew there was something more than this necessary, and that much more

was promised;—"the *secret* of the Lord is with them that fear him"—even that spiritual understanding of his word and will which is often "hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes."

There are many things concerning the commandments of God which he will hide from us till we beseech him to discover them to us. But there is one mistake which, especially, we are *sure* to fall into; indeed, it is the grand delusion which we bring into the world with us, and which is the cause of all our misery; namely, that we think "his commandments grievous." And, although he assures us to the contrary, and although every day's experience tends to convince us that we are happy or miserable exactly in proportion to the diligence or carelessness with which we observe those commands; yet do we continue to feel and think them a bondage, and to wish to rid ourselves of the yoke and the burden, till Jesus himself, by instilling his grace, and writing his laws in our hearts, convinces us that the "yoke is easy and the burden light."

The view which our depraved nature gives us of the laws of God is, that they are the arbitrary mandates of a hard master. "I knew thee that thou art an austere man," is exactly the feeling of the heart towards Him naturally; but when we are divinely taught to know God, and to learn his will, then we admire his goodness in this especial

respect, that all his commands tend to save us from misery; and that the restrictions which his law imposes are as essential to our happiness and welfare in this life, as they are to our safety and felicity in the life to come.

We prove ourselves to be but strangers in the world, and unacquainted with its true character, by our constant inclination to partake of its "mortal poisons," and to drink of its "dangerous waters," instead of contenting ourselves with the wholesome fruits and pure springs which are provided for our refreshment. Our first parents set us an example in this respect which all their children are prone to follow. But those who are taught of God, learn to discriminate between good and evil; and see it to be as much their interest as their duty to refuse what is prohibited, even though it should appear fair as the fruits of Paradise.

Let it ever be remembered, that when we feel most at ease and at home in this world, when its delights seem to satisfy us, and its ties most closely unite us to it;—when we show ourselves to be strangers to its snares, bewildered and endangered by its thorny mazes—we then have most need to say,

"Since I' m a stranger here below,
Let not thy path be hid;
But mark the road my feet should go,
And be my constant guide."

## XXXVIII.

### THE LIST OF NAMES.

A GENTLEMAN who was making a tour through several parts of the country, on a mission of benevolence, on his arrival in a certain town, was, upon inquiry, immediately directed to the house of Mr. W——, a man who was eminently distinguished in the neighborhood in which he lived; but it was neither for his affluence, his style of living, his party spirit, his conviviality, his connoisseurship, nor his literary taste, that he was distinguished: to none of these things he paid any particular attention, and to some of them he was decidedly averse. But if any stranger in distress, or any one engaged in a good work and labor of love, came to that place, inquiring, according to the apostolic custom, "who in it was worthy;" Mr. W—— was the name that instantly occurred to whoever of his townsfolks chanced to be applied to. And, as he was not in the least busy and officious in his benevolence, and as he exercised his judgment and discrimination in every case that was presented to his notice, he was as much respected and esteemed as he was beloved by his neighbors.

The stranger who was now directed to his

door, introduced himself to Mr. and Mrs. W——, and to a young lady who happened to be on a visit of a few days at their house. Having explained the nature of his business, and solicited their advice and co-operation, the stranger requested Mr. W—— to furnish him with a list of names of such of the inhabitants, especially of the young people of the place, as would be most likely to enter into his views, and exert themselves in the cause. Mr. W—— immediately took out his pencil, and set down two or three names at the top of a sheet of paper, without a moment's hesitation. Having so done, he began to rub his forehead, and put himself in the attitude of recollection.

"I fear sir," said he, "we shall find some difficulty in filling up our list. There is a good number of young people here, but ——— My dear" (addressing his wife,) "what do you think the Miss J———'s would say to such an application?"

Mrs. W. There can be no harm in putting down their names: as a *new thing* I think they would be very likely to take it up.

Stranger. Alas! Madam, we find *Miss J——'s*, go where we will: the difficulty is to meet with those who are willing to plod and fag in a good cause, when the novelty and *eclat* are gone by. However, we may be thankful that there are so

many, and I trust the number is increasing, of those "hidden ones," who are willing to labor on, without noise and without praise.

MRS. W. And there are Mrs. and Miss P——.

MR. W. Yes; I was thinking of them; but we must try and get one or two of the *great folks* to sanction us first, otherwise they would, I fear, be shy of the application.

STRANGER, (*smiling.*) The old story again! we meet with many of those *Mistresses* and *Misses* who can only venture to do good in good company, or with their own party.

MR. W. What do you say to Mrs. F—— and her daughters?

MRS. W. We must let them have all the management, and all the credit too, or they will not move a finger for us.

STRANGER, (*laughing.*) As to the credit, they shall be perfectly welcome to that; and as to the management, we find ways of humoring weak persons of this description, by giving them some office, or a little apparent distinction in the business, without much inconvenience to the cause. But really sir, these good people in your town seem all to be old acquaintances of mine.

MR. W. Yes sir: as face answereth to face—

MRS. W. I was thinking of all the G——'s.

MR. W. So was I; but the worst of it is, they will never join in it if the J——'s do; it would set

them against the thing at once; however we can call on *them* first.

STRANGER, (*smiling again.*) But then will not these *J——'s* make the same objection to the *G——'s*.

MR. W. I think they have rather more sense; they would at any rate be ashamed of allowing such an objection. What think you, my dear, of Miss L——?

MRS. W. I am afraid she is too indolent.

STRANGER. Never mind:—who knows but if we can prevail with her to taste the pleasures of useful activity, she may become at least *less* indolent? Let us have her name.

MRS. W. Would it be worth while to call at the T——'s?

MR. W. They are immersed in business: and seem to take an interest in nothing else: to oblige *us* they would probably do a little towards it; but it is disagreeable enough to apply in these cases.

STRANGER. How great a mistake do those thrifty persons make, in supposing that the time or money they might devote, with a willing mind, to the cause of God, and for the good of their fellow creatures, would be lost to their families!

MR. W. So far from it sir, that I am firmly of opinion, from the observations I have made, that what persons thus grudgingly withhold,

either of money or time, is taken from them by losses in trade, or in some other way, even seven fold.

STRANGER. I believe it sir. Providence well knows how to manage this. And I also believe, that those who, influenced by another spirit, exert themselves to their power, and even beyond their power, often have it made up to them a hundred fold.

MRS. W. Well, but, there is our friend, Miss D——.

MR. W. Miss D——, I am afraid will have nothing to say to us. This lady, sir, sees so many bad motives in herself, and in every body else, that she is afraid of doing right for fear of doing wrong.

STRANGER. It is well that this error is not so common as the rest. Bad motives we have in plenty, it is true! Even the apostles of our Lord knew not, on some occasions, "what manner of spirit they were of;" yet, as He who *did* know, did not consider that a sufficient reason for discharging them from his service, so neither can such apprehensions form any excuse for our own negligence, nor for despising the exertions of others.

MRS. W. Well, let us hope, sir, when you go round amongst our good neighbors, you will find things better than we have given you reason to

expect; ours has really been an unpleasant task this evening; I trust we have not quite forgotten that charity which "hopeth all things."

Mr. W. There is, indeed, much danger of doing so, whenever it is necessary to allude to the failings of others. What a consolation it is that He who sees all our bad motives, and knows our manifold infirmities, sees also what sincerity we have, even when our fellow creatures may doubt its existence!

Stranger. It is, indeed, a tranquillizing thought in this hard-judging world. And we may truly exclaim in this respect, as David did on a different occasion—"Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, and *not* into the hands of man!"

Mrs. W. Yes; milder are the chastisements of our Heavenly Father, than the tender mercies of our fellow creatures.

Stranger. But what have you to tell me of these names at the top of your list, are there none of these *ifs* and *buts* about them?

Mr. W. They are good girls, sir; I have only to say that they will do all that modest, prudent, well-directed piety and zeal, can do: and that, without any attempt to be busy or to make themselves conspicuous. Indeed, they will give you more information and better advice than I can; and we cannot do better than go and make them acquainted with the business.

As soon as the gentlemen were withdrawn, the

young lady who had remained a silent auditor of the above conversation, said to Mrs. W——,

"I have been wondering all this time whether, if I had lived in this town *my* name would have been set down; and if it had, *what account would have followed.*"

Mrs. W. That was a question well worth asking, my dear; but it would require much thought, and very close dealing with yourself to answer it faithfully.

Young Lady. I know that, Ma'am; however, one thing I can tell without any trouble at all, and that is that I should *not* have been classed with those good girls whose names were set down first. How happy, how enviable such people are!

Mrs. W. They are indeed the very happiest people upon earth.

Young Lady. And indeed, indeed Ma'am, so far from being at all like them, I felt, while you and Mr. W—— were describing the others, as though I myself were being mentioned in almost every instance; I feel as if I had nearly all their faults put together.

Mrs. W. Well, but you have one advantage at least, which perhaps several of those persons do not possess; and which if you are but willing to avail yourself of it, will greatly assist you in avoiding these faults; I mean your being conscious of them.

Young Lady. But how highly favored some

people are, who seem to have none of these troublesome faults in their way, but do good naturally, as it were!

Mrs. W. My dear, I have never met with such a person in my life: nor have you. It is a delusion which flatters our indolence, and which is too often allowed to silence conscience, to suppose that characters eminently good and useful are so by nature and inclination, without very much trouble or self-denial; and that our own failings are so constitutional that we are more to be pitied than blamed for them.

Young Lady. And yet surely, Ma'am, there is a difference in our natural propensities?

Mrs. W. Doubtless; but not so great and influential a difference as the indolent and desponding are willing to suppose. Never do we read in the Bible or elsewhere, of any who have glided easily and softly to heaven, borne on the tide of their own amiable dispositions. No, we must all row against the stream, and that perpetually, or our course will be retrograde.

Young Lady. Well, but now there are these B——'s and C——'s ?

Mrs. W. Well, and do you really suppose that those excellent girls have no conflicts with their own hearts?—Do you think they have had no selfishness, no vanity, no indolence, no pride, no pique, or prejudice, or love of the world to contend with, however naturally amiable they may

be? Yes, they would tell you that they have felt and do feel all this; and that while they live they shall have to maintain the difficult and trying conflict. This *warfare* indeed forms the grand and wide distinction between characters; and the question we should be incessantly putting to our own consciences is—are we *fighting*, or are we *yielding*?

YOUNG LADY. But do not good people sometimes yield to temptation, while those who are not real Christians sometimes resist it.

MRS. W. Occasionally both these things may happen, but not generally. Those who are the sincere followers of Christ do prevailingly follow him and keep his commandments; whilst others, who through the remonstrances of conscience and the restraints of education may resist some sins, yet habitually *do not practise self-denial.*

YOUNG LADY. Ah, I know they do not!—it seems impossible!

MRS. W. They fancy it impossible, because they feel it to be difficult; and because they don't like the trouble. Depend upon it, my dear girl, the real cause of such despondency concerning one's own character is a secret unwillingness to undergo a change; and thus the fatal delusion is willingly indulged, that the attainments which some make in holiness and usefulness are not to be expected in *our own* case.

YOUNG LADY. Well, but do you really think it

possible that I, for instance, should ever become so active and useful and excellent as those young people?

MRS. W. If you *really* wish it, my dear, you will ask it fervently, and endeavor perseveringly, and then you will obtain the same grace and strength as they. But if you wish it faintly, you will ask languidly and endeavor lazily, and then you will *not* obtain.

YOUNG LADY. Ah, that is the very thing!—how am I to feel those sincere and earnest desires?

MRS. W. You must begin at the beginning; that is, with a determination to save your own soul; to take no rest or satisfaction in other things till you have hope in Christ; yes, the charity must begin at home; and when once it has been said to you, "Thy sins which were many are forgiven," then the language of your grateful heart will be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and a course of active duty and obedience, with all its difficulties, will be pleasant, and *comparatively easy*.

YOUNG LADY. I am sure I wish that were my happy state.

MRS. W. You wish it perhaps, just as the young ruler did. He desired to obtain eternal life; he could not bear the idea (and who can bear it?) of everlasting destruction. But he wanted so very much to enjoy this world first, that he went away sorrowful, in the miserable bondage

of an earthly mind and an evil conscience, rather than make the sacrifice and become free indeed.

YOUNG LADY. And what *could he do* if he had not strength of mind enough?

MRS. W. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Had he never read that promise? could not he then have asked for it? Yes, but the thing was, he was afraid of the consequences; *he did not like* to give up the love of the world.

YOUNG LADY. Well, I often fear that will be my case.

MRS. W. Beware, my dear friend, how you suffer your mind to consent to such a possibility! Do you know what you mean? do you consider what it implies? can you think for one moment of *eternity*, and say so? No, the delusion is this, you indulge an indistinct hope that you shall be saved, *somehow*, at last; that though you cannot expect a *high* seat in heaven, yet that you shall *just be admitted*—that God will never suffer anything so tremendous to befall *you* as eternal ruin. Because you cannot bear to think of it, you imagine He will not execute his own threatenings. You think he is too merciful.

YOUNG LADY. And is He not merciful?

MRS. W. Yes; and so does He abound in mercy that He suffers these tremendous threatenings to be ever thundering around us, to warn us of our danger; at the same time that He is inviting

and beseeching us to become reconciled to himself; but it must be on his own conditions; and if we will not submit to them, we *must* abide the miserable, the intolerable consequences!

YOUNG LADY. I wish I *could* submit to them.

MRS. W. Those desponding, fretful wishes, believe it my dear, *will never do*—they leave you just where they found you, unholy and unhappy. Say rather, "I *must*, I *will*, lay hold on eternal life!" It is not presumption, nor will God be displeased with such resolute language; because this is the very good he offers you, and your greatest sin is unwillingness to accept it. But do not be discouraged by *difficulties*, these you must meet with, otherwise the kingdom of heaven need not "suffer violence, nor require to be taken by force." Remember, "they that *overcome*, and they only, shall inherit all things." There is no promise to the inactive; if we are not fighting we shall never conquer; and remember, in this conflict it is *conquer or die!*

---

## XXXIX.

### THOUGHTS IN A CROWD.

Long on the merry promenade
The ladies walked, the music played,
  And streamers fluttered gay:
While ocean watched the sun retire,
Till every ripple, tipped with fire,
  Reflects his parting ray.

'T was there, amid the motley throng,
A musing stranger passed along,
  Unnoticed in the crowd;
And we by some strange arts have guessed
The thoughts he doubtless had expressed
  If he had thought aloud.

"Amid this mass of joy and wo,
One heart," thought he, "alone I know,
  Its burden and its cares;
And yet, though strangers all to me,
The bond of Christian charity
  Unites my heart to theirs.

"Yes, and by sympathy I trace
The story told in many a face,
  Nor other record need,
They who have sinned and suffered know
The common tale of human wo,
  And how all hearts to read.

"On many a brow, with notice brief,
I learn the tale of hidden grief,
  Too ill concealed from view:
In many a sparkling eye I see
The hopes lit up that cheated me,
  When life with me was new.

"And does some passing face express
The lines of sordid selfishness—
  Of cold contracted care?
Well, let me not disgusted turn,
But still, as in a glass, discern
  Some likeness even there.

"On that wan cheek sits pale disease,
And vainly courts the freshening breeze
  Its roses to restore;
Sufferer! permit a stranger's sigh,
Who fain would turn thy languid eye
  Where pain shall be no more.

"The stones that form this massy pier
Will brave the storms of many a year,
  And see an unborn race
Here flaunt, and sport, and pass along,
When I, and each of this gay throng,
  Have found our resting place.

"The thought is trite, but yet so true,
To serious minds t' is ever new,
  And mighty import bears:
And if a stranger might intrude
Grave thoughts on this gay multitude,
  Such musings should be theirs!

"Amid this throng sure some there be
Who tread a path no eye can see,
  The path that few have found:
And do *I* climb the heavenly hill,
(Let each inquire) or slumber still
  Upon enchanted ground?

"Is the poor heart that flutters here
A contrite one—a heart sincere—
  Its hopes and joys on high;
Or is it tied and bound below
To this vain world of vice and wo,
  Pleased with its slavery?

"This is the question!—Tell me not
What has been or may be thy lot,
  While life's brief lamp burns out!
'T were cruel trifling to inquire,
Or feel for that a warm desire,
  While *this* remains a doubt.

"But now this roving eye would rest
On ocean's gently heaving breast,
  Its storms all hushed to sleep;
Gladly my weary spirit flies
From human woes and vanities,
To Him who spread these radiant skies,
  And rules the mighty deep."

Thus inly musing as he went,
His way the pensive stranger bent
  Amid the heedless throng:
And let the reader undertake
To settle if his thoughts would make
  A *sermon* or a *song*.

## XL.

### ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO.

EDWARD, a thoughtful lad, when happily seated beside his father and mother, on sabbath evenings, encouraged by their pious and judicious conversation, often communicated his thoughts to them with freedom and simplicity.

"You know, papa," said he, "that Mr. ———, this afternoon, reminded us how nearly we had arrived at the close of another year; and, how much he endeavored to impress us with the thought; saying, that although but one month of the present year now remained, yet it was likely that some one at least of that large congregation would never live to see a new year; and, that we ought each of us to realize the possibility of the case being ours; and then he said, that it would not do to presume even upon another month: but that a week, a day, an hour, a moment, might be all that remained to some of us."

FATHER. Well my dear!

EDWARD. Well, and all this was very true, and very impressive, was it not? And yet, whenever I hear ministers say that sort of thing, somehow, I never feel much impressed by it, but I always think that I shall not really die so soon; perhaps, because I have heard it so often, and it has never

happened yet. This I am sure is very wrong, but I don't know how to help it.

FATHER. Because such an event is not probable, its being possible does not duly affect us. The mind instantly relieves itself from a painful thought, which hope can so easily elude.

MOTHER. There is a common saying, used often with great levity, which I own with me has much more force than any such reflections, and for this reason, that there is no possibility of evading it.

EDWARD. What is that, mamma?

MOTHER. Did you never hear persons say when any thing has happened, either good or bad—"It will be all the same a hundred years hence?"

EDWARD. Yes, often.

MOTHER. Well, that short sentence is a sermon to me. The whole weight of eternity hangs upon it, and it reduces all the interests of time to their true insignificance.

EDWARD. But a hundred years is such a very long while!

MOTHER. It seems so to you. But recollect, Time never stops, and that every year we live seems to be shorter than the last.

FATHER. I have already lived nearly half as long, and I can assure you, the years that have passed since I was a lad like you, appear only like a tale that is told, and I know that the remaining half, even if it were at all probable that

I should reach such extreme old age, would seem to fly very much faster.

MOTHER. But although there can be no rational doubt that even fifty years hence, I shall not only have entered the unseen world, but shall be by that time an old inhabitant of it, and familiar with its mysteries; yet, we will not now speak of uncertainties, from which the mind can so easily escape: we will not therefore say twenty or fifty years to come; because, by the barest possibility, the oldest of us here might live so long; but, in the year *one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two*, you, Edward, as well as your parents, will have entered on the future state, and our very names perhaps, will scarcely be remembered on the earth.

FATHER. This thought will bear pursuing; the more we dwell upon it, the deeper is the impression. To name this certain date, and say, then my eternal doom will be fixed; truly it is overwhelming, but it is our own faults if it does not also inspire us with unspeakable joy.

MOTHER. It is a thought that I would fain make more and more familiar to my mind. There is no day that passes in which I do not, many times in the course of it, need the powerful influence of such a reflection, to tranquillize, and moderate, and regulate my feelings. It should make us ashamed of being disquieted by the petty vexations of life, as well as of our eagerness for its

transient pleasures. It would also be an unfailing solace under the heaviest trials.

EDWARD. But, because life will then certainly be over, ought we to be quite indifferent about what happens to us in it?

FATHER. There is little danger, my dear, of our being too indifferent to our earthly interests. Do what we will, with all our watchfulness, prayers, and meditations; even Christians generally (except in a few rare and happy instances) love this world too well, and care inordinately for their comfortable accommodation in it. So that our wisdom is to cherish every consideration that tends to weaken our earthly attachments.

MOTHER. We should endeavor to view the events of life as we know we shall view them by and by. In the year *one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two*, in whatever state I may then be, I am quite sure of this, that those things which now deeply interest me, will be subjects of entire indifference, except, as parts of the necessary discipline and probation, through which I was to pass. As we now reflect upon a day of amusement when it is over, or upon hours of bodily pain when in the enjoyment of health and ease, so, from the unseen world, we shall regard all that pleases, pains, or agitates us now; and doubtless, the degree of interest we feel in these things, will then be matter of our greatest astonishment.

EDWARD. But papa, in the Psalms and the

Proverbs, and in many parts of the Bible, how much a man seems prosperity in this life. I am sure Solomon, and even David, and Job, and all a been seemed to wish to enjoy themselves very much.

FATHER. And in this we are sure to imitate them, however we may fail to copy their example in other respects; but we must remember, that in Old Testament times, "Life and Immortality were not clearly brought to light;" and nothing is more striking than the different manner of speaking about the things of this world, employed by the writers in the Old Testament and the New, a difference which we are too apt to overlook. Now we are told to "rejoice, as though we rejoiced not, and to weep, as though we wept not, because the fashion of this world passes away."

MOTHER. It is Lord Bacon, I think, who says, "*Prosperity* is the promise of the Old Testament, and *Adversity* is the promise of the New."

FATHER. The dispensations of Providence in the world are the clearest indications of how small account is the brief period of our earthly existence in His sight, who sees the end from the beginning. And surely it is our wisdom to endeavor to view all circumstances as God views them. Things would not be suffered to go on as they do in this disorderly world, if that degree of importance which we attach to the interests of life really belonged to them. When we read the

history of nations, or of individuals, or observe the events of private life, we are ready to wonder that injustice and oppression should be so often suffered to prevail, that falsehood and selfish policy should sometimes seem successful, while truth, honesty, and disinterestedness are misinterpreted and unrewarded; and that the designs of craft, envy, and malignity, should ever appear to triumph. But we forget how short is their triumph. God, from that throne where He sits "judging right," bears with our impatient complaints, and with the hard and murmuring thoughts we are apt to entertain of his righteous government, knowing how soon all will be rectified. "One day is with Him as a thousand years:" and He sees that day as though it were already come, when the complicated mass of human affairs will appear arranged and adjusted according to the strictest rules of truth and equity, in the view of the assembled universe. *Then all wrong will be set right;* what a quieting consideration! David himself, amid the trials and persecutions he met with, says, "he should have fainted unless he had believed it."

MOTHER. And it is but a little while to wait. When once death has drawn aside the veil that is upon our hearts, all that we now call mysterious, both in providence and grace (at least in relation to ourselves) will, we may reasonably suppose, be as suddenly and clearly revealed as the indis-

tinct objects in a dark night, if the sun were in one moment to be darted to the meridian sky.

FATHER. Yes, and this must be the case, whether we enter upon a state of happiness or misery. But who can conceive of the intolerable torments of self-reproach which must attend the discovery in the latter alternative! Surely it were of itself a hell of misery, to see in the light of those inextinguishable fires, the true value of those things for which heaven was bartered!

EDWARD. What a good thing it would be, if we could but see it so now!

FATHER. Let us remember, my dear boy, that the light of God's word shines with sufficient clearness to show all objects distinctly; if we do but also seek the illumination of His spirit. This light, though shining in a dark place, would at all times guide us safely and pleasantly along the narrow way.

MOTHER. You know, dear Edward, how anxious we are, and what exertions we make, that seven years hence you may be in a respectable and prosperous condition; qualified to pass successfully through life. You feel too, I am sure, the importance of it yourself, and this anxiety and care, if subordinate, are natural and right. But let us, my dear child, with deeper anxiety and more strenuous exertion, prepare for a period, perhaps rather more distant, but which, after all, may be much nearer. Let us only extend the

date a little further, make a very slight alteration in the figures, and be chiefly concerned for your interests *then*. Oh, that you may be in prosperous circumstances a hundred years hence! Astronomers calculate the positions of the planets, and politicians speculate about the state of affairs at that period; and shall not we make as long a calculation in relation to our own personal interests! Oh, whatever may befall us during the fleeting interval, let us give the utmost diligence, that all may be well with us in the year *one thousand nine hundred and twenty-two*.

Thus ended their conversation, and the writer can think of no better advice wherewith to sum up the exhortations she has from time to time addressed to her kind and candid readers. Very earnestly therefore requesting their attention to it, she must, for the present, affectionately bid them farewell.

END OF VOL. II.

3 2044 058 205 063

A FINE IS INCURRED IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW.

| | |
|---|---|
| JAN-1 1972 ILL | 3578963 |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |